Revisiting Rituals in a Changing Tibetan World

EDITED BY

KATIA BUFFETRILLE

BRILL

BRILL'S TIBETAN STUDIES LIBRARY

Revisiting Rituals in a Changing Tibetan World

Brill's Tibetan Studies Library

Edited by

Henk Blezer
Alex McKay
Charles Ramble

VOLUME 31

The titles published in this series are listed at brill.nl/btsl

Revisiting Rituals in a Changing Tibetan World

Edited by

Katia Buffetrille

BRILL

LEIDEN • BOSTON
2012

Cover illustration: Sherpa house in Changma (Bhandar) village (Solu, Nepal), 2007. Photo by Katia Buffetrille.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Revisiting rituals in a changing Tibetan world / edited by Katia Buffetrille, École pratique des Hautes Études.
p. cm. -- (Brill's Tibetan studies library ; v. 31)
This volume is the result of an international conference held on November 8th and 9th 2007 at the Collège de France.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-90-04-23217-4 (hardback : alk. paper) -- ISBN 978-90-04-23500-7 (e-book : alk. paper) 1. Buddhism--Tibet Region--Rituals--Congresses. 2. Buddhism and culture--Tibet Region--Congresses. I. Buffetrille, Katia, editor of compilation.

BQ4975.R48 2012
294.3'43809515--dc23

2012025694

ISSN 1568-6183
ISBN 978 90 04 23217 4 (hardback)
ISBN 978 90 04 23500 7 (e-book)

Copyright 2012 by Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands.
Koninklijke Brill NV incorporates the imprints Brill, Global Oriental, Hotei Publishing, IDC Publishers and Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission from the publisher.

Authorization to photocopy items for internal or personal use is granted by Koninklijke Brill NV provided that the appropriate fees are paid directly to The Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Suite 910, Danvers, MA 01923, USA.
Fees are subject to change.

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements vii

KATIA BUFFETRILLE—Introduction 1

HILDEGARD DIEMBERGER—Holy Books as Ritual Objects and Vessels of Teachings in the Era of the 'Further Spread of the Doctrine' (*Bstan pa yang dar*).. 9

FABIENNE JAGOU—The Use of the Ritual Drawing of Lots for the Selection of the 11th Panchen Lama 43

THIERRY DODIN—Transformed Rituals? Some Reflections on the Paradigm of the Transformation of Rituals in the Tibetan Context.. 69

FERNANDA PIRIE—Legal dramas on the Amdo Grasslands: Abolition, Transformation or Survival?.......................... 83

NICOLA SCHNEIDER—The Ordination of *Dge slong ma*: a Challenge to Ritual Prescriptions?... 109

MIREILLE HELFFER—Preservation and Transformations of Liturgical Traditions in Exile: the Case of Zhe chen Monastery in Bodnath (Nepal)... 137

KATIA BUFFETRILLE—Low Tricks and High Stakes Surrounding a Holy Place in Eastern Nepal: the Halesi-Māratika Caves.. 163

ALEXANDER VON ROSPATT—Past Continuity and Recent Changes in the Ritual Practice of Newar Buddhism: Reflections on the Impact of Tibetan Buddhism and the Advent of Modernity... 209

Marie-Dominique Even—Ritual Efficacy or Spiritual Quest? Buddhism and Modernity in Post-Communist Mongolia.......... 241

Robert Barnett—Notes on Contemporary Ransom Rituals in Lhasa.......... 273

Notes on Contributors.......... 375

Index.......... 379

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This volume is the result of an international conference entitled *La transformation des rituels dans l'aire tibétaine à l'époque contemporaine* (Transformation of rituals in contemporary Tibet) held on November 8th and 9th 2007 at the Collège de France.

This conference was made possible thanks to the financial and material support of the École pratique des Hautes Études, the Collège de France, particularly Professeur Pierre-Étienne Will and Professeur Gérard Fussman, the Centre national de la recherche scientifique, the Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche, the Centre de recherche sur les civilisations de l'Asie orientale and its former director Alain Thote: to all these I wish to express my gratitude.

Special thanks go to Mécénat 100%, a non-profit association that supports a variety of artistic, cultural, scientific, and humanitarian projects, and to Marc Chauchard who was instrumental in presenting the conference project.

I wish to express my deepest appreciation to the fine scholars whose excellent contributions appear in this book and for their patience in awaiting its publication.

The publication of this volume has come about through the combined efforts of several people. In particular, I would like to thank Charles Ramble who recommended the book for Brill's Tibetan Studies Library and has helped with a range of issues. The layout of this volume has been carefully prepared by Kemi Tsewang.

Again, the Centre de recherche sur les civilisations de l'Asie orientale, and in particular its current director Annick Horiuchi and vice-director Éric Trombert, and Mécénat 100% have been strongly supportive and I would like to emphasise my gratitude for their encouragement.

KATIA BUFFETRILLE

INTRODUCTION

KATIA BUFFETRILLE

For several years, a group of researchers from the "Centre de recherche sur les civilisations de l'Asie Orientale" (UMR 8155) has been considering the dynamics of ritual and conducting regular meetings on this theme. In fact, the importance of ritual in the Tibetan world and neighbouring regions (Mongolia and Nepal) has been emphasised by numerous authors, and for good reasons. In this vast region, ritual permeates all aspects of political, religious and social life.[1]

Ritual has an intrinsic social dimension. Performed individually or collectively, and repeated regularly, ritual displays a strongly conservative character. Indeed, despite a certain margin of improvisation, any ritual is meant to be faithful to precise rules, which constitute its foundation and determine its efficacy. While rituals evolve over the course of time, it generally does so in a very slow, and often almost imperceptible, way. However, upheavals—for reasons internal or external to the community or society concerned—can occur and bring about significant modifications in the form of a ritual, and sometimes, even lead to its disappearance, either temporarily or permanently, or give birth to new rituals. The changes that have confronted Tibet and its neighbouring regions in the recent past have led us to seriously question the transformation of rituals in contemporary Tibet. A symposium on this theme took place in Paris in November 2007, bringing together fifteen researchers from various European and American institutions: École pratique des Hautes Études, Centre national de la recherche scientifique, École française d'Extrême-Orient, Université de Lille, Nanterre-Université, and the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Oslo, Columbia, and California (Berkeley).

The articles in this volume offer the results of recent research, based on both fieldwork and textual studies, presented at the symposium by

[1] For a general and extremely rich study of Tibetan rituals, see J.I. Cabezón (2010) *Tibetan Rituals*, Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press.

researchers who have worked in central and eastern Tibet, Nepal and Mongolia. The choice of these countries is explained by the many and long-standing ties that have been woven over the centuries. These relationships have been political, military, economic and religious in nature. The intention here is not to write a history of Tibeto-Nepali and Tibeto-Mongolian relations—the literature on these topics is well-known—but only to recall some significant facts.

Nepal and Tibet have been in contact since the 7th century, when Srong btsan sgam po (617–649/650) brought numerous kingdoms under his power and extended his authority over an immense territory thanks to his conquests and the marital unions he established. According to Tibetan tradition one of his wives was a Nepali Buddhist princess named Bhṛkuṭī In the following century, the king Khri Srong lde btsan (742–797?) sent his minister Dba' Gsal snang to Nepal in order to invite Śāntarakṣita, an Indian monk, to confer ordination on the first Tibetan monks. It is to Nepal, as well, that Tibetans went to study Sanskrit, seek out Buddhist manuscripts and visit the two great pilgrimage sites: Bodnath and Swayambūnath, the renovations of which were, moreover, often sponsored by Tibetan monks, as Alexander von Rospatt reminds us in this volume. But the influence of Nepal was not limited to the religious level. The art of central Tibet —a religious art in fact—was subjected to a strong Nepali influence that some contemporary Tibetan authors trace back as far as the imperial period.[2] The artists, mainly Newar, were gold- and silversmiths, wood sculptors and painters. Among those who practised their talents in Tibet over the centuries, one name has remained particularly famous: that of Anige (1245–1306). Having come to Tibet in company with twenty-four other artists, he put his talents to the service of the Sa skya pa, then went to the court of Khubilai Khan, where 'Phags pa directed him to build a stūpa for Sa skya Paṇḍita Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1182–1251).[3] Once established, relations between Tibet and Nepal were never broken off. They were not only religious and artistic relations, since economic interests were very prominent. Several north-south trade routes taken constantly by Kashmiris, Tibetans and Newars crossed the Himalayas. Newar communities of gold- and silversmiths and merchants, were set-

[2] A. Chayet (1994) *Art et archéologie du Tibet.* Paris: Picard, p. 181.

[3] G. Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* ([1949] 1980: 276–77) and Anning Jing 1994, "The portraits of Khubilai Khan and Chabi by Anige (1245–1306), a Nepali artist at the Yuan court", *Artibus Asiae*, Vol. 54, no. 1/2, 40–86.

tled in Tibet from at least the 13th century and in the 17th, a treaty concretised their monopoly on trade. But with the rise of Gorkha power in the 18th century, the traditional relations established between the Tibetans and the Newar leaders and merchants were from then on formed with the conquerors. However, since the latter were followers of the Hindu religion they had much less affinity with the Tibetans. Following territorial and economic disagreements, the Gorkha armies entered Tibet for a first time in 1788, then again in 1791 when they sacked Bkra shis lhun po monastery in Gtsang. Nonetheless, trading links remained very important: the Newar merchant community established in Tibet was in fact extremely powerful. Its members had taken Tibetan wives and adopted Tibetan customs and rituals, and this strong Newar community remained present in Lhasa until the Chinese occupation of the 1950s.

The recent upheavals experienced by Tibet have not put an end to these long-standing ties: Nepal currently hosts more than twenty thousand Tibetans, and Tibetan Buddhism is experiencing a very great expansion. This is strikingly illustrated by the construction of multiple monasteries in the Kathmandu Valley, as Mireille Helffer's contribution shows, as well as by the Buddhist appropriation of pilgrimage places that are also claimed by Hindus, such as the Halesi-Māratika caves described by Katia Buffetrille.

On their side, Tibet's ties with Mongolia date back to the 13th century. The rise in power of the Chinggisid Mongols heralded a new turning point in the history of the Land of the Snows. While a grandson of Chinggis Khan, Khubilai, Great Khan and founder of the Mongol Yuan Dynasty (1277–1367), ruled over the Mongol empire—into which China and Tibet were integrated—a particular politico-religious relationship was instituted between the Mongol emperors and the Tibetan hierarchs of the Sa skya pa school whom the former took for chaplains. This relationship—in which the religious dignitary, considered as the spiritual master, gives teachings and initiations, while the monarch assures his protection and make offerings for the good of the Doctrine—was to become the ideal model for the Tibetans in their relations with foreign sovereigns. It was reactivated by the powerful Mongol prince Altan Khan (1502–1582) at the time of his meeting with Bsod nams rgya mtsho (1543–1588) in 1577, a meeting that marked the conversion of the Mongols to the Dge lugs school of Buddhism and the Tibetan hierarch receiving the title of 'Dalai Lama', 'Master [vast as]

the ocean'. The relationship did not end there as the 4th Dalai Lama Yon tan rgya mtsho (1589–1617) was found within the kin of this same Altan Khan, and the 5th Dalai Lama received spiritual and temporal power over Tibet (1642) from the hands of Gushri Khan, head of the Khoshot Mongols.

The 5th Dalai Lama exercised considerable religious influence over the Mongols, which often allowed him to act as mediator when disagreements arose between them. But after his death, which the regent concealed for fourteen years, a conflict pitted the Tibetans, supported by the Zunghar Mongols, against the descendants of the Khoshot Gushri Khan, aided by the Manchu army. While military operations between the Mongols and Tibetans ended with this episode, religious ties remained very close until the institution of communism in Mongolia. As demonstrated in Marie-Dominique Even's article, these ties have now been revived.

This vast area has experienced significant changes following political and socio-cultural upheavals—the Chinese occupation of Tibet in the 1950s, the end of the communist era and the transition that followed for Mongolia, the opening up of Nepal to the world in 1951 and the influx of great numbers of Tibetan refugees into its territory, and the arrival of modernity and globalisation. It therefore seemed essential to investigate the impact that these events have had on rituals: have they also experienced changes? If so, were they significant? Was it simply an adaptation?

In its own way, each article responds to diverse questions, which arise when dealing with a particular aspect of ritual life.

Hildegard Diemberger explores "the significance of books as ritual objects and as vessels of teachings, as well as their importance in the revival of Buddhist culture and rituality in the Tibetan areas of China after the Cultural Revolution, a period sometimes conceptualised as the 'further spread of the doctrine'". She relies on Alfred Gell's theory who proposes to think of art in terms of *agency* rather than in terms of beauty and she suggests that by recognising the distinctive "agency" of books as literary artefacts it is possible to understand their role in local, transregional and international networks devoted to the preservation and revival of the Tibetan cultural heritage. She also analyses the modification that books undergo following the introduction of digital technologies and how they give a good example of the role of ritual in a socio-cultural context in rapid evolution.

Fabienne Jagou investigates the origins of the rite of drawing lots that most recently allowed Chinese and Tibetan officials to determine the successor of the 10th Panchen Lama. She examines the reasons for the survival of this procedure and analyses the successive developments that its practice has experienced to the present day. Finally, she discusses the legitimacy of this rite in the very particular religious context that prevails today in China and Tibet, and tries to assess its impact on contemporary Chinese political life.

From three examples taken from the last two decades—the Lhasa demonstrations in 1987, the burning of furs in 2006 and the mass prayers for the long life of the Dalai Lama in 2007—Thierry Dodin explores the possibility of a change in Tibetan religious rituals that would have the objective of registering opposition to the current political regime in Tibet. His analysis leads him to conclude that while religious rituals have occasionally been performed to convey a political message, and while the performance of religious acts have often been conspicuous during political protests, the rituals themselves seem not to have been either modified or used as means of opposition to the political regime. This suggests that the paradigm of 'transformation' is hardly appropriate in adequately describing the relationship that exists between religious rituals and political protest in contemporary Tibet.

With Fernanda Pirie, we leave the realm of religious rituals to take an interest in feuding —practices still current among the Tibetan pastoralists of Amdo—and to processes of mediation, both traditional and modern, and examine the evidence of continuity and transformation. Through the description of a ceremony aimed at settling an old quarrel, the author shows that the procedure is an entirely new form of state-sponsored legal ritual. The essential principles of the historical process of this traditional practice are still current, but now with the informal support of local government administrators who are compelled to subvert official state policy on law and order with a view to putting an end to local conflicts.

Nicola Schneider looks into the question of full ordination of nuns in Tibetan Buddhism, a question that stirs up many discussions within the Tibetan community in exile. The author sets forth the historical background of the controversy and the role that Western nuns have played, and presents the arguments of the different protagonists. She shows that while some religious dignitaries and Tibetan politicians have come down in favour of full ordination of nuns, a part of the cler-

gy is totally opposed because it implies changing the monastic code. This debate thus illustrates the importance Buddhists attribute to the prescriptions of the monastic code, particularly in Tibet, but more generally in all Buddhist countries.

Mireille Helffer concerns herself with the monastery of Zhe chen bstan gnyis dar rgyas gling, founded in 1735 in Kham, and then reconstructed at Bodnath (Nepal) through the impetus given by Mkhyen brtse Rinpoche at the beginning of the 1980s. The author shows the importance the monastery's authorities attach to the preservation of the liturgical tradition of the mother monastery in Tibet. However, this ostensible fidelity notwithstanding, the decision to present the sacred dances (*'cham*) to a Western public has led to the selection of the most spectacular dances and the disappearance of the close connection between ritual and dance.

Katia Buffetrille analyses the changes, over the course of the last fifteen years, experienced by the Halesi-Māratika Caves, a holy place in eastern Nepal that is claimed by both Hindus and Buddhists. She shows the degree to which the process of Buddhicisation of this place of pilgrimage started by Māratika Lama, a Sherpa tantric practitioner, has again been taken in hand by exiled Tibetan hierarchs since the death of the lama, and has even asserted itself in spite of the establishment of the Maoists in Nepal. This has been accomplished largely through the pursuit of international recognition. These two processes—Buddhicisation and international recognition—have a significant impact on the ritual life of this holy place. The author shows how the various protagonists respond to the political, economic and religious stakes, and suggests that this holy place can be seen as a paradigm for a phenomenon that can be encountered elsewhere in Nepal, as well as in India.

Alexander von Rospatt's article deals with recent changes in the ritual practice of the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley. He notes that while the patterns of sponsorship of the renovations of the Svayambhūcaitya have changed over the centuries, this does not apply to the attendant rituals He shows the impact of the socio-political changes in Nepal since its opening to the world in 1951 and discusses the attempts to ease caste and gender restrictions, the responses to the perceived degeneration in ritual practice and the concomitant attention to meaning, the trends towards standardisation of ritual practice, and the deliberate revival and proliferation of particular rites as part of a

broader agenda of strengthening Newar Buddhism. He concludes that a number of forces and mechanisms at work are not particular to Newari Buddhism but show more generally how a pre-modern form of Vajrayāna Buddhism struggles to adapt to modernity, a struggle that has also affected ritual practices in Tibetan Buddhism since 1959.

Marie-Dominique Even turns her attention to religious practices that have been current in Mongolia since the restoration of religious freedom of 1990. Contrary to what one might think, the Soviet regime was not successful in permanently eradicating religion, and recent years have seen a significant revival of Buddhism and its multiple rituals aimed at bringing health, prosperity or better rebirth to the laypeople who commission them. In the new pluralist Mongolia, Buddhism has however lost its ancient monopoly over the religious life of individuals: it sees itself challenged by shamanism, which it had marginalised, and also by newly-established foreign religions, indeed even by a Westernised Buddhism that focuses more on the spiritual development of individuals than on propitiatory rites.

The last contribution is that of Robert Barnett. The article studies the re-emergence of ransom rituals in present-day Lhasa and in other areas of Tibetan culture. These rituals, which go back to ancient times, are performed to help both communities and individuals eliminate obstacles and malevolent forces. Considered by the authorities as superstitions harmful to society, these ransom rituals are particularly difficult to study. The author analyses the (minor) changes they are going through, reflecting the available resources and the knowledge of the specialists. He deduces that in spite of the prohibitions that have been imposed on the rituals, the knowledge has been transmitted, through word of mouth or through bodily memory. He also analyses the political aspect of these rituals, which for some practitioners dramatise in miniature the outwitting of a powerful, invasive force, and the degree to which these rituals present in miniature the native capacity to circumvent a powerful and coercive force.

NOTE: Tibetan terms are presented either in transliteration or in transcription, with the transliteration indicated within parentheses at the first occurrence of the term. Common terms such as Rinpoche, Amdo and Kham are presented in Anglicised transcription, as they appear in numerous publications.

HOLY BOOKS AS RITUAL OBJECTS AND VESSELS OF TEACHING IN THE ERA OF THE ‘FURTHER SPREAD OF THE DOCTRINE’ (*BSTAN PA YANG DAR*)[1]

HILDEGARD DIEMBERGER
MONGOLIA AND INNER ASIA STUDIES UNIT
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Restored to their monasteries and shrines or re-discovered and catalogued, holy books have played an important part in the revival of Buddhist culture and rituality in the Tibetan areas of China since the Cultural Revolution. This period is sometimes conceptualised as the ‘further spread of the doctrine’ (*bstan pa yang dar*) (Lce nag tshang hum chen and Ye shes ’od zer sgrol ma 2004: 15), in relation to the ‘earlier spread’ (*bstan pa snga dar*) in imperial Tibet and the ‘later spread’ (*bstan pa phyi dar*) after the 10th/11th century. This paper explores the significance of books as ritual objects and as vessels of teachings, and the possibility that by recognising their distinctive “agency” (Gell 1998) it is possible to understand their role in local, transregional and international networks devoted to the preservation and revival of the Tibetan cultural heritage. It also considers how books have been affected by the introduction of digital technologies and how they provide powerful examples of the role of ritual in a rapidly transforming social and cultural context.

[1] This paper reflects many ideas that gradually emerged among a group of scholars at Cambridge—Stephen Hugh-Jones, Karma Phuntsho, Libby Peachy, BuRkhard Quessel, Caroline Humphrey, Uradyn Bulag and Gregory Delaplace—while managing book-related research projects. I owe special thanks to them as well as to Bruce Huett and Maria Antonia Sironi, who assisted me in most of my own research. Special thanks go also to Lobsang Yongden, Zenkar Rinpoche Tudeng Nyima, Tinley Namgyal and Pasang Wangdu for providing assistance and information. Finally I wish to thank the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC grants 19407 and AH/H00159X/1) and the Italian Ev-K2-CNR committee for funding the research upon which this paper is based.

I. What is a book?

Like any other scholar of Tibetan culture, I have often translated passages that refer to books, but in doing so I did not reflect much on the relevant English vocabulary. It seemed straightforward: I simply used the adequate phraseology to refer to books, as we understand them now, in the Euro-American context. Recently, however, I came across one of these passages while translating the fifteenth-century biography of Chökyi Drönma (Chos kyi sgron ma, 1422–1455)[2] that made me reflect on the actual wording. The passage would be conventionally rendered as follows:

> At Shekar there was a set of canonical commentaries (*Bstan 'gyur*) written in gold that had been made by her Gungthang (Gung thang) ancestor Bumdegön Nagpo ('Bum lde mgon nag po).[3] This had been taken from [lower] Ngari (Mnga' ris, i.e. Gungthang) by the Lord of Northern Latö (La stod) and was later transferred (spyan drangs) to Southern Latö. One day she said that she wanted to see (*mjal*) it. When she arrived at the place where it was kept, at first she was unable to open the lock of the door. Then the magnificent lady of innate wisdom said, 'May the owner have power over her things!' and touched the lock, which opened immediately. She saw that the set of commentaries was covered with dust. She cleaned it up and later added the parts that were missing. She provided for cloth (*na bza'*) and strings (*sku rags*) to wrap the books, established the custom of celebrating offerings to them and appointed a custodian. By offering all this she looked after the books (*zhabs tog mdzad*) (Biography of Chökyi Drönma, folio 22 a–b).[4]

Looking at the vocabulary that referred to the holy books, however, I realised that a more literal translation was possible, revealing something about the way books are viewed in the Tibetan context. This stood

[2] This was the Gungthang princess who became the first Samding Dorje Phagmo (Bsam sdings Rdo rje phag mo) (see Diemberger 2007).

[3] Bumdegön ('Bum lde dgon/mgon, 1253–1280), founder of the Gungthang kingdom, was an important ancestral figure for the Gungthang royal house (Everding 2000: 391ff).

[4] In Tibetan: *Gung thang pa rang gi yab mes 'bum lde mgon nag po bya bas bzheng pa'i bstan 'gyur gser gyi gdangs byes grags pa la stod byang pas mnga' ris nas spyan drangs/ slar la stod lho na phebs nas bzhugs pa la/ kho mo mjal du 'gro gsung/ sgo lcags ma phyed par gyur pa na dpal ldan lhan cig skyes ma nyid kyi gsung gi nor la bdag po rang dbang che gsung/ phyag reg tsam kyis sgo lcags phye na gzigs mo zhib du gnang/ thams cad rnyul khyi phung po'i dbus na bzhugs pa la/ byi dor mdzad nas ma tshang pa thams cad legs par gsos/ nam bza' dang/ sku rag phul/ mchod pa'i rgyun btsugs/ dkon gnyer bkod pa sogs phul du 'gyur pa'i zhabs tog mdzad/*

in contrast to the view of the book as a passive object implied in the conventional English wording. The books made by Chökyi Drönma's ancestor had, in fact: been "invited" (*spyan drangs*) from Ngari. […], Chökyi Drönma wanted to "see" (*mjal*) them and eventually "offered (*phul*) a robe (*na bza'*) and a belt (*sku rags*)" to clothe them. This vocabulary seemed to indicate that the books were in fact addressed as honorific persons and not as mere objects. Furthermore, by their sheer presence the holy books prompted Chökyi Drönma to find, restore and look after them, thereby fulfilling a moral obligation[5] that had been neglected by the family into which she had married. On the basis of these observations I wondered whether, by referring to anthropological theories of non-human agency, it might be possible to understand better what books were doing to people and how they mediated a range of social agencies. I thus referred to Alfred Gell's theory that tried to capture the agency of artworks in a cross-cultural perspective. According to Gell, artworks and other inanimate objects such as stones or plants or body-parts used as relics can be agents in an indirect sense, for although they themselves are not intentional beings they can act as the medium through which people manifest and realise their intentions. They can become "extensions" of persons as part of their "distributed personhood".[6]

This approach can be used in relation to Tibetan books as an incarnation of Buddha's legacy. According to Indian Buddhist perspectives books have been the repositories of Buddha's word. They embodied the teacher after he had passed away, as stated in the early scriptures such as the *Mahāparinibbannasutta*:

> Then the Bhagvan addressed the Venerable Ānanda: 'It may be, Ānanda, that some of you will think, 'The word of the Teacher is a thing of the past; we have no Teacher.' The Doctrine and the Discipline, Ānanda,

[5] The moral obligation entailed in Buddhist books is best illustrated by verses reported at the end of *Prajñāpāramitā in Eight Thousand Verses*: "…when, through the Tathagata's sustaining power, it has been well written, in very distinct letters, in a great book, one should honour, revere, adore and worship it, with flowers, incense, scents, wreaths, unguents, aromatic powders, strips of cloth, parasols, banners, bells, flags and with rows of lamps all round, and with manifold kinds of worship (Conze 1973: 299). See also Tuladhar-Douglas *forthcoming*.

[6] Gell does not see persons as "bounded biological organisms"; rather, "A person and a person's mind are not confined to particular spatio-temporal co-ordinates, but consist of a spread of biographical events, and memories of events, and a dispersed category of material objects, traces, and leavings, which can be attributed to a person and which…may, indeed, prolong itself long after biological death" (Gell 1998: 122).

> which I have taught and enjoined upon you is to be your teacher when I am gone (Clarke Warren 1984: 107).

The same idea is reflected in the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra*[7] and in many statements that I came across in current Tibetan monasteries, where one of the most common citations regarding the importance of books is the Buddha's prophecy to his disciple Ānanda that he, the Buddha, would return in the form of words in the degenerate era: "When the last period of five hundred years [i.e. the degenerate age] arrives, I will come in the form of writing. Believing in your mind that it is me, respect it!"[8] Tibetan books can thus make the Buddha present. However, they may also embody not only the 'distributed personhood' of the Buddha, reflecting his original soteriological project, but also that of authors, translators, sponsors, scribes, carvers, readers, ritual users, carers and possibly even rescuers or retrievers who followed the same vision and acted accordingly.

Tibetan books are usually treated as honorific persons: they are invited, met and clothed in robes tied with belts. They are thought and dealt with through vocabulary and attitudes usually related to humans of high rank, transcending the distinction between animate and inanimate. Books are also addressed with a language that is the same as that used for icons and relics. In fact icons, books and relics/reliquaries are respectively symbols or receptacles (*rten*) of 'body' (*sku*), 'speech' (*gsung*) and 'mind' (*thugs*) of the Buddha or of a later personality who continued the deeds of the Buddha. The definition of books as 'receptacles of speech' captures the fact that, read and recited by a human actor, the written text creates the audible presence of a person across space and time, just as effigies evoke the visual impact of the body and relics the spiritual power of the mind. This view goes back to Buddhist

[7] "The Thathagata is your teacher, Ananda. You have ministered to me, Ananda, with friendly acts of body, acts of speech, acts of mind. Therefore then, Ananda, just as you have given affection, faith and respect to me as I am at present in this incarnation, just so, Ananda, should you act after my decease towards this perfection of wisdom... As long as this perfection of wisdom shall be observed in the world, one can be sure that 'for so long does the Thathagata abide in it' that 'for so long does the Thathagata demonstrate dharma' and that the beings in it are not lacking in the vision of the Buddha, the hearing of the dharma, the attendance of the Samgha". One should know that those beings are living in the presence of the Thathagata who will hear this perfection of wisdom, take it up, study, spread, repeat and write it, and who will honour, revere, adore and worship it" (Conze 1973: 299–300).

[8] Karma Phuntsho, personal communication. I also came across statements of this kind in several Tibetan monasteries.

India where scriptures were often treated as equivalent to relics and, like relics, were used to distribute the Buddha's legacy as widely as possible. They were all "expressions and extensions of the Buddha's biographical process" (Strong 2004: 5–10). The idea that a text could function like a relic, as a form of Buddha's presence, was later followed and further elaborated in China and throughout East Asia (Barrett 2008: 66). In a lesser, and more controversial way images were used in a similar way, but were often dependent on texts and relics for full consecration.

In the Tibetan context one finds the three categories of sacred objects—books, effigies and relics—associated, often supporting each other: scriptures are used to consecrate icons and reliquaries[9] and relics can be used to bless scriptures and effigies.[10] Chökyi Drönma, for example, used the preserved blood of her master, Bodong Chogle Namgyal (Bo dong Phyogs las rnam rgyal, 1375/6–1451), mixed with ink, for the reproduction of his collected works. The blood blessed the edition that she produced and made it into a special source of blessing (*byin rlabs*), the 'waves of glory/splendour' that describe the empowering feeling transmitted by anything sacred.[11] While she produced these 'receptacles of speech' she also produced a realistic image of the deceased master as a 'receptacle of the body' and a reliquary as a 'receptacle of the mind', all of which had the power to bless people (see Diemberger 2007: 199–203).

Like relics, effigies and other objects, books have cultural biographies and social histories (Appadurai 1988: 3ff).[12] As in the case of Trobriand Kula shells described by Malinowski and discussed by Appadurai (1986: 20) books and people can become agents of each

[9] They can be used both as ritual objects inserted in effigies and reliquaries and as ritual texts providing the basis for the consecration ceremony (*rab gnas*) (see Bentor 1995: 290–311).

[10] The relics of the Buddha were considered an essential element to make an effigy or a reliquary sacred; later the consecration ceremony added to the sense of sacrality created by the relics and sometimes superseded it (see Bentor 1995: 301–302). Relics of important Buddhist personalities have been used in the production of effigies, reliquaries and sometimes scriptures up to the present day.

[11] This notion characterises the source of blessing—a sacred object, person, place etc.—as active and captures the psychology of how this is perceived by the human being through sight, sound or physical contact.

[12] For example Sørensen (2007: 857–87) provided a very detailed description of the wanderings of a famous effigy that conferred power on the political leadership and participated in the political history that surrounded it. Famous books and collections of scriptures can work in an analogous way.

other's value definition. Obtaining and owning a book, and even more so reading and learning from it, can have a significant impact on a person's social identity. In a few extreme cases human beings could be seen, or see themselves, as books. I was told of a couple of incidents in which scholars had acquired so much knowledge from reading books that they dressed themselves up as books.[13] More often the distinction between people and books is preserved, but, like effigies and relics, books constitute an active source of spiritual power and, in the case of rulers, political legitimacy.

In the Tibetan context religious texts as books can empower people, especially through the rituals that give access to them, and define their realm of action through religious and moral commitments. This applies not only to the content but also to the book as an object: having a holy book and neglecting it is expected to generate a sense of uneasiness for one betrays the responsibility that goes with it. Looking after it, caring for it, as Chökyi Drönma did, is considered to be a source of merit and moral satisfaction. One cannot step over a book as one cannot step over a human being or any other sacred object, and if one does so by mistake, the action has to be reversed by putting the book on one's own head. When a holy book needs to be disposed of, this has to be done in a respectful way, preferably by burning or carefully storing it away.

The metaphor of motherhood is used in the common language to indicate an original (*ma dpe*) from which copies are made. In a more extraordinary way the image of motherhood was evoked by the eastern Tibetan female spiritual master Sera Khandro (Se ra mkha' 'gro, 1892–1940) in speaking about scriptures. She spoke of the texts that she was revealing as equivalent to her children, making "the materially gen-

[13] One such incident was reported to me by Karma Phuntsho who was told by the abbot of Namdroling Gompa (Rnam sgrol gling dgon pa) in Mysore an anecdote about a 19th century scholar, Tendzin Dragpa (Bstan 'dzin grags pa), a disciple of Nyima Dragpa (Nyi ma grags pa), who challenged Kongtrul ('Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas), in a debate. On that occasion Tendzin Dragpa is said to have claimed that he had acquired so much knowledge from reading books that he had become equivalent to a book himself, and he appeared dressed as a book. In another way, the distinction between animate and inanimate is transcended, albeit recognised, when a *stūpa* such as that of Bodnath in Kathmandu is defined as an emanation (*sprul sku*) of the Buddha, with the same vocabulary used for an incarnated lama (see Bentor 1995: 294–95). They both are agents for the liberation of all sentient beings. In a similar way the distinction between animate and inanimate is transcended by the term *kuten* (*sku rten*), 'body vessel', which can refer to both a statue and a human medium possessed by a deity.

erative process of sexuality and revelation explicit" (Jacoby 2007: 238).[14] Children and treasures were something that came from her but transcended her and defined her. She was made into a treasure-revealer (*gter ston*) by the treasure of scriptures (*gter*) she revealed, while she was made into a mother by her children. Both entailed a different set of commitments. She indeed devoted her life to revealing teachings and looking after those of her master while straddling her life as a mother and consort of spiritual masters.

While revealed scriptures acted on, and defined, saintly beings such as treasure-revealers, holy books also had an impact on more ordinary followers of their traditions. The way in which books can define people is vividly reflected in a song of the upper Arun valley. This goes:

> The snow makes the honour of the mountains
> The books make the honour of the lamas
> The subjects make the honour of the ruler
> The children make the honour of the man
> The jewels make the honour of the bride…[15]

The song captures how books could define the village lama,[16] not only in religious terms but also socially. Based on a set of ancient Tibetan notions such as honour (*dbu 'phang*) (that will be discussed below), this view is also consistent with the Buddhist perspective of the 'two truths' (*bden pa gnyis*): although the self is ultimately illusory, in the conventional reality it is constituted in a relational way and is part of an interdependent system of phenomena. Thus not only do people act on books, but books act on people. I shall show later in this paper that what books do to people has had an important part in shaping the revival of Buddhism in the post-Mao era.

[14] For example she "defers her disciples' exhortation to show them the new Treasure she has just revealed by telling them 'This is my daughter that I have taken out as a treasure—I wonder whether I can take out a son'" (Jacoby 2007: 238). In another statement she says: "Aside from being the one who can take out the Treasure of boys and girls, I don't have a way to take out vast earth treasures'" (Jacoby 2007: 238).

[15] *Gangs ri la gangs dkar dbu 'phang gso/ bla ma la dpe cha dbu 'phang gso/ dpon po la 'bangs rnams dbu 'phang gso/ khyo ga la bu tsha dbu 'phang gso/ mna' ma la rgyan cha dbu 'phang gso/*

[16] The community where I recorded this song inhabits the upper Arun Valley in north-eastern Nepal. They used to be at the margins of the Tibetan state, had no monasteries and had their religious needs looked after by married lamas of the Nyingma (Rnying ma) tradition and by a class of priests called *lha bon*. These religious specialists were also part of the political elite, the 'big people' (*mi che*).

II. Books' double blessing

Tibetan mythology concerning the arrival of Buddhist texts in Tibet clearly shows the agency attributed to scriptures. At the same time it reveals the multilayered sacredness of books as ritual objects, reflecting the ability of Buddhism to absorb and reframe elements from competing traditions—in Alexis Sanderson's words, the "vitality through versatility of method" (*upāyakauśalyam*) (Sanderson 2008)[17] that Buddhism had already deployed in India in relation to Śaivaite cults.

The first scriptures are said to have come down from heaven onto the Yumbu Lagang (Yum bu bla sgang), the famous royal fortress on the top of a hill in southern Tibet. They are mentioned in different sources as either a mantra or some specific *sūtras*, which were welcomed by the king Lhathothori Nyantsen (Lha tho tho ri gnyan btsan/Lha tho do re snyan btsan). One of the earliest references to this myth is that given in the Dba' bzhed:

> As far as the first appearance of the holy doctrine at the time Lha tho do re snyan btsan is concerned, the six syllables of India—*Oṃ ma ṇi pad me* [*hūṃ*]—written in gold [and placed] in a casket (*sgrom bu*) fell (*babs*) from heaven (*nam mkha'*) in front of the king (*mnga' bdag*). Without having realised whether this was Buddhist or Bon, this was named 'secret Gnyan po' (Gnyan po gsang ba) and *g.yu mgon*—called *rngo*, this is a kind of barley—and *gser skyems* [libations] were offered to it. While [the Gnyan po gsang ba] was in the Gnyan treasury of Yun bu gla sga[ng], from time to time the Btsan po himself used to open and contemplate it. Thanks to his devotional offerings the king, who was 80 years old, became like a youth of 16. (*Dba' bzhed*, folio 1b)

In this famous passage, and its later variants,[18] the scriptures or the casket containing the scriptures and other ritual items were called 'secret Nyanpo', which, possibly with an intentional play on words, can refer to a secret 'friend' (*gnyen po*; Skt: *mitra*) but also a deity of the *nyan* (*gnyan*) class associated with territorial cults (for a discussion of this

[17] In his paper "Versatility of means: the Transformation of the Śaiva Cults of Bhairava and the Goddess in the Buddhism of the Yoginītantra", paper given at the Circle of Tibetan and Himalayan Studies, March 14, 2008, Alexis Sanderson demonstrates how Buddhism was able to borrow and adapt to its soteriological aims ritual practices taken over from Śaivism, with which it was competing for patronage and popularity.

[18] For example the *Rgyal rabs gsal ba'i me long*, see Sørensen (1994: 150) for a review of the variants.

point see Sørensen 1994: 150). The syllables/scriptures are said to have actively come down (*babs*) from heaven—they were not dropped! The verb 'bab literally means to descend, come down, fall and is also used for spirits descending, i.e. possessing a medium (*lha 'bab*), and for the inspiration to chant the Gesar epic descending on a possessed bard (*babs sgrung*). The 'secret Nyanpo', as a sacred object, gave great benefit to the king in the form of long life and youth, but its blessing was limited for he could not access the content. Only his descendant Songtsen Gampo (Srong btsan sgam po) was able to obtain access to the content by introducing the Tibetan script, instigating translations and learning how to read. Through the power of the written word, its reading and recitation, the blessing originating with the Buddha could eventually be fully deployed.

This myth not only speaks of the very beginning (*dbu rnyes*) of Buddhism in Tibet it also suggests that the arrival of books was framed in a pre-existing form of sacredness. The fifteenth century historian Gö Shönnu Pal ('Gos gzhon nu dpal) saw this account as a mythological rendering of the first Tibetan encounters with Buddhists. He was very critical of it and in the *Blue Annals* he followed Nel Paṇḍita's position that: "Because the Bonpos adored Heaven, it was said that (these books) had fallen from heaven" (Roerich 1988: 38). Both the myth and its critical interpretations show that books as sacred objects merge two different forms of sacredness: one associated with the Buddha and anything that could embody his person, the other associated with local pre-existing cults. This interpretation was not lost on an authoritative Mongolian scholar, Mergen Gegen, who in his *Altan tobchi* reports this same myth and renders in Mongolian the Tibetan expression 'secret Nyanpo' (*gnyan po gsang ba*) as *Ongon* (see Humphrey forthcoming). This sacred object of Mongolian shamans has the shape of a package, is both ancestor and vessel, and has to be looked after as a person and even offered food (Hamayon 1990: 403)—which recalls what King Lhathotori Nyantsen was doing with the offering of barley! With the Buddhification of Mongolia, the same place on the altar was taken by Buddhist books and icons, generally called *burqan* (Delaplace and Micoud 2007; Bawden 1968: 37). As in Tibet, holy books in Mongolia are spoken of with the honorific language usually used for a high ranking person, and the practice of making offerings[19] to them has survived down to the present day.

According to the song of the upper Arun Valley cited above, books are seen as a source of honour (*dbu 'phang*). Literally meaning 'the order of the head', following sitting orders according to rank, it can be high or low and is a marker of the power and prestige associated with a person—and by extension an institution or a country. This notion is part of a set of ideas widespread in the Tibetan and the Tibeto-Burman context (see Sagant 1990: 157; Tucci 1955: 36) and like the related notion of *mnga' thang* or *dbang thang*, i.e.power/might/majesty, is closely related to ancient Tibetan royalty and mountain cults.[20] As this set of notions was eventually integrated and transformed with the Buddhification of Tibet, it retained some of its characteristics. In a parallel way, mountains, the 'owners' of the land (*sa bdag*), became custodians of the Buddhist doctrine and, as *terdag* (*gter bdag*), often the 'owners' of sacred scriptures (see Karmay 2005, II: 31–51). It is in such a political and religious framework that books were endowed with power as sacred objects, reflecting both the sacredness of the Buddha and that of the ancestral mountain cults.

Both in Tibet and Mongolia, books are therefore treated with the respect given to a revered person and are endowed with a multilayered form of sacredness and agency. Books can be used as ritual objects for the sake of the human communities to bless fields and cattle, prevent hail, avert illness, dispel misfortunes, empower leaders and increase people's Buddhist merits. At the same time they can transmit the teachings of the Buddha and of later Buddhist masters to those who can receive their content across place, time and cultures. In all cases books act on people, but they do so in different ways. Building on the Buddhist idea of multiple approaches according to individual ability, books have thus been integrated into a world dominated by orality and ritual performance where the content of texts is directly accessible only

[19] This is usually done in forms of grains and/or recitation. This gesture can be interpreted as similar to the offering performed in front of a Buddha effigy, but may have more complex and ancient resonances.

[20] The *Dba' bzhed* provides an interesting outline of the relevant political theory: in a debate between Buddhist and anti-Buddhist ministers in the aftermath of the death of emperor Thrisong Detsen (Khri Srong lde btsan) the anti-Buddhist minister pleaded for keeping the traditional customs which he describes as including the worship of the ancestral mountain Yarlha Shampo (Yar lha sham po), royal funerals, rituals celebrated by the court priests etc. According to him all this gave "great majesty (*mnga' thang*) and high political authority (*chab srid mtho bo*)" to the ruler and if these customs were not continued "his political authority (*chab srid*) based on the relationship between lord and subjects would decline" (see *Dba' bzhed* folio 27b–28a).

to a limited part of the population. Despite some tensions and scholarly disputes, book mythology and ritual practice can be seen as an example of what Gombrich (1971, 1988) defined as successful "traditional synthesis" between Buddhism and spirit religion.

III. Of teeth, pancakes and prints: technological transformation as propagation of blessing?

In Tibet the spread of Buddhism went together with the rise of the empire and the introduction of writing. The power of the written word entailed a whole range of cultural and political transformations in Tibetan society that go far beyond the scope of this paper. Some seven centuries later, the introduction of printing technologies transformed the process of book production, even though manuscript production has continued up to the present day.

The earliest printing known so far seems to have developed in China in the 7th century, in the Taoist-Buddhist milieu, and is linked to the famous and controversial empress Wu, who had declared herself as an incarnation of the Bodhisattva Maitreya. Presumably leaning upon the Indian tradition according to which text could function as a relic substitute, she seems to have promoted printing in her effort to emulate Aśoka as Cakravartin and distributor of holy relics (Barrett 2008). In Central Tibet printing with wooden blocks seems to have been adopted only around the beginning of the 15th century, following the earlier printing of Tibetan texts in Khara Khoto (12th century) and in the capital of the Yuan Empire (13th century).[21] This process raises a range of little-explored questions: to what extent was the relationship between people and books transformed by the introduction of printing? Is there something distinctive about Buddhist books, linked to the cult of relics, which may have shaped the way in which technological innovation was and is experienced in Tibet? I started to think about this last question when I observed some manifestations of the Buddhist cult of relics.

One day in summer 1991 I arrived at Ganden (Dga' ldan) and I saw a monk who was meticulously holding the tooth of Tsongkhapa (Tsong kha pa) while impressing its shape on countless little clay balls. In this

[21] See Schaeffer 2009; van der Kuijp (1993: 279–98); Ehrhard (2000: 10ff); Jackson (1983: 5–24).

way the little lumps of clay were blessed by the holy relic and could bless the pilgrim who would receive it as a holy gift during his visit. The blessing of the tooth could thus spread through the multiplication of its prints. The contact and the mark left as a visible trace of this contact could transmit the blessing of the ancient master. The forms of blessing through contact with relics are multifarious. In Bhutan I came across a family that owned an iron plate attributed to the treasure-revealer Pemalingpa (Pad ma gling pa, 1450–1521), which could be used to produce blessing pancakes. In an analogous way I was told that Pemalingpa had carved his own blocks and if books were printed from them they would have a special blessing.[22] It seems that printing can thus be seen in the larger framework of the diffusion of blessing, both through contact with a blessed object and through the spread of the written message itself.

Chökyi Drönma was an important agent in the cultural movement that led to the 15th century emergence of printing in the Gungthang kingdom, which became one of the early hubs for what can be seen as the Tibetan 'printing revolution'.[23] It is possible to see a parallel between the way in which she dealt with the mortal remains of Bodong Chogle Namgyal and the reproduction of his scriptures. After the death of her master she deliberately decided not to keep all the relics in one reliquary, which would have easily raised disputes among competing parties. She chose instead to distribute bone splinters and *tsha tsha* containing his ashes among all the numerous disciples. In this way the mortal remains of Bodong Chogle Namgyal distributed his personhood among the entire community of followers and passed it on over generations. In an analogous way Chökyi Drönma tried to spread his legacy by promoting the reproduction and diffusion of his texts, instigating or at least inspiring some of the earliest prints.[24]

---

[22] I am indebted to Karma Phunthso and his family for this information—and delicious pancakes!

[23] I am borrowing here the expression used by Elisabeth Eisenstein (1993) in relation to the introduction of printing in European culture even though the context is obviously different. In the 15th century in certain areas of Tibet such as Gungthang there was a sudden boom in printing activities with social and cultural consequences that still need to be fully assessed.

[24] According to her biography, Chökyi Drönma seems to have been involved in the printing of some texts and images when Bodong Chogle Namgyal was teaching in Kyirong in the 1440s (see folio 62b) and promoted the systematic reproduction of his collected works after his death. The *Gung thang rgyal rabs* (123) reports that her father

Like relics and consecrated icons, holy books were for a long time outside the realm of traded commodities. Even the introduction of printing did not necessarily imply the immediate rise of a book market. The blocks were kept in printing houses (*par khang*) attached to monasteries or seats of local rulers. If someone wanted a book printed, he or she would go to the printing house with paper and ink, or cover the expenses for procuring paper and ink. Eventually the sponsor would make a lavish donation. The whole enterprise was framed in the morality of merit-making activities and religious patronage: big patrons would provide the bulk of the funding necessary for the carving; small patrons would benefit from the presence of the blocks and sponsor reprints. It was not a market transaction until books started to be produced for sale. More research needs to be done to discover how and when books started to become a regularly traded commodity. Printing undoubtedly facilitated this process but did not determine it. Also, even when books came on the market, through their use as sacred objects they were likely to be swiftly removed from the sphere of normally tradable commodities. They would instead become part of the category of objects for which market transactions were considered to be morally contentious.

Technically speaking, printing interrupted the direct link between the human being, the scribe, and the text traced through gestures; as underlined by Tim Ingold (2007) and Walter Ong (1982), "it was printing not writing that effectively reified the word" (Ong 1982: 119–21). Block-printing, however, still preserved some of the craftsmanship of hand-copying through the carving of the block and the reproduction of the image on paper by contact, as if the block was a blessing relic. The printed book that resulted from the process was in many ways similar to a manuscript. Both would have the *pothi* format that recalled the early palm-leaf manuscripts that came from India to Tibet.[25] Also, even

---

Thri Lhawang Gyaltshen (Khri Lha dbang rgyal mtshan) sponsored the print of the same books. Whether this was the same action and thereby the first printing activity in Gungthang, cannot yet be fully verified. However, even if Chökyi Drönma did not instigate the print herself she was definitely a promoter of the activities that led to printing. A peer of Chökyi Drönma, the ruler of Yamdrog Namkha Sangpo (Yar 'brog khri dpon Nam mkha' bzang po) who was like her a disciple of Bodong Chogle Namgyal, produced the print of a work of their master that is still extant and preserved in the British Library. Shortly afterwards Chökyi Drönma's brother, Thri Namgyal De (Khri Rnam rgyal lde) became an important sponsor of a variety of printing activities (see Ehrhard 2000: 17).

though printing promoted the standardisation and diffusion of authoritative texts with important consequences, their circulation was limited and the production of manuscripts remained an important mode of transmission of texts, and still is. Both forms of reproduction of texts were to be seen as a way to spread Buddha's original blessing. On the whole therefore, the introduction of printing did change the relationship between human beings and text, but only in a limited way. More importantly, it did not alter the sense of moral obligation associated with the possession and handling of the book as a ritual object. The same rituals could be carried out with hand-written or printed texts; the same place could be taken by printed books or manuscripts on the altar. And they had to be looked after in the same way.

In Tibet printing technology not only fixed the word much more rigidly as suggested by Ingold and Ong, it gave it a new sense of motion, changing for ever its Buddhist landscapes. Thanks to it, printed words on prayer-flags and in prayer-wheels started to spread Buddha's blessing everywhere, turning the Wheel of the Dharma to an unprecedented extent. The blocks for prints on prayer-flags were much more easily available than those for larger texts. They were easily produced by common people with some carving skills and the printing process was a simple enterprise that could be done by any household —as it still is, especially in remote Himalayan villages.

IV. Books and networks during the 'further spread of the doctrine'

During the Cultural Revolution books were among the symbols of the Four Olds and thus many were intentionally destroyed as part of the iconoclastic drive.[26] Many others were lost due to neglect. Some were rescued and hidden, surviving this tragic period thanks to people who

[25] Older manuscripts of texts such as the various versions of the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra* still have two circles in the middle of the text recalling the circles around the string that used to bind the palm-leaves, and later paper sheets, together. Occasionally the two rings appear also in early prints, such as a 1407 print of a canonical work sponsored by the Shelkar Lhatsenkyab (Shel dkar ruler Lha btsan skyabs) and produced under the aegis of Bodong Chogle Namgyal, see Diemberger forthcoming. In the context of early printing, the imitation of the physical features of the manuscript must thus have been important, in addition to its content.

[26] Sometimes to give way to another book, Mao's Red Book, worshipped as an object as well.

often risked their lives to achieve their preservation. When in 1978 Deng Xiaoping announced his radical change of policy towards minority nationalities (and also relations with the rest of the world), this gradually gave way to a revival of Tibet's Buddhist heritage. The retrieval of books became an important part of this process,[27] together with the rehabilitation of religious personalities and the reconstruction of religious sites. Extensive re-publication of Tibetan classics, preservation of ancient texts and textual research became part of government sponsored operations aiming at the preservation of Tibetan Cultural heritage and following a morality that is secular but is often very close to a Buddhist one.[28]

Books and manuscripts became even more the centre of the Buddhist revival privately driven by monastic and lay communities throughout Tibet. Ritual texts were indispensable to consecrate newly constructed effigies and places, and ancient scriptures acted as powerful relics. The rescued books not only were endowed with the power traditionally attributed to them as sacred objects and vessels of sacred teachings, they became empowered by the epics of concealment, survival and rediscovery. These echoed narratives about Buddhist teachings that were hidden during the imperial period to escape anti-Buddhist persecution and were revealed centuries later by treasure-revealers (*gter ston*) (see for example Germano 1998: 53–55). The rediscovery of books that had survived the Cultural Revolution and the more general striving for the reconstruction of the Tibetan spiritual heritage was profoundly informed by historical topoi. It is therefore not surprising that this period has sometimes been called the 'further spread of the doctrine' (*bstan pa yang dar*). In this light the Cultural Revolution is seen as parallel to the alleged 9th century anti-Buddhist

[27] Kapstein observes that despite the massive destructions of the Cultural Revolution. "During the past few decades it has become apparent that… the textual record is far better preserved than was previously thought to have been the case and many thousands of previously unknown manuscripts and printed books have surfaced in recent years" (Kapstein 2006: 24).

[28] In contemporary museums and archives one can find a modern reincarnation of the ambiguous distinction between book as object, in this case cultural object (Ch. *wenwu*) for preservation, and its content (Ch. *neirong*). For the sake of the protection of cultural relics access to the contents has often been severely restricted. Ernst Steinkellner (2006: 208) successfully clarified the important distinction between object and content while negotiating international co-operation concerning the availability of texts contained in Sanskrit manuscripts preserved in Tibet.

persecution under Langdarma (Glang dar ma)—whereas the 'further spread of the doctrine' stays in continuity with the 'early spread of the doctrine' (6th–9th centuries) and the 'later spread of the doctrine' (after the $10^{th}/11^{th}$ century). The construction of such a temporal continuity enables the people involved in the religious revival to harness the moral authority of the past while operating within the constraints of a late socialist framework.[29] In this context books seem to deploy the power to mobilise people around them, to get people to relate to one another and build networks to rescue, preserve, re-discover and also assess what has survived. While carrying out research in Tibet I came across several of these networks that had local, regional or even a trans-national reach. Here I will describe some of them, starting from the story of Trakar Taso (Brag dkar rta so), one of the most exemplary cases I came across.

Perched on a cliff on the western slope of the deep gorge that links Dzonkha (Rdzong kha/dkar/dga') with Kyirong (Skyid grong) in south-western Tibet is the monastery of Trakar Taso. Built around a famous Milarepa cave, it became one of the renowned early printing houses of this area. Thanks to its remote location, it survived the Cultural Revolution better than other monasteries. Abandonment and neglect, however, took their toll. When a survey team of the Tibetan Academy of Social Sciences passed through this area in the late 1980s, they visited it and saw the ruins, the mural paintings and the scattered manuscripts and printing blocks. The place was completely abandoned, but what had survived captured the feelings of these young scholars. They were able to contact a former monk of Trakar Taso who lived in the vicinity of Milarepa's birthplace. Shedra Tendzin (Bshad grwa Bstan 'dzin) responded to the call with great enthusiasm, even though he was married. He abandoned his family life and took the lead of a newly emerging monastic community. Before leaving, the scholars gave him some *yuan* in the hope that this would work as seed-money. The monastic community, consisting mainly of young nuns, soon managed to give a proper shelter to relics, books, printing blocks and even an old statue of the founder of the monastery, Ngadag Lhatsun Rinchen Namgyal.[30]

[29] I call the post-Mao era 'late socialism', borrowing the term from scholars of the former Soviet Union to highlight the temporal distance from the founding fathers and their political approach. While in the Soviet Union socialism experienced a collapse, in the Chinese context, socialism seems to have been reinventing itself successfully and some scholars prefer to use a terminology that indicates its vitality (Pieke 2007).

When one of the scholars returned to Trakar Taso a couple of years later he saw that the monastery had grown significantly. The support came not only from privately raised funds but also from the head (Ch. *xianzhang*) of Dzonkha municipality, who had been a monk himself during his youth[31] and was aware of the importance of the site and of what it contained.

Unfortunately, a few years later the enthusiastic monk who had revived the monastery died in a car accident, leaving the young nuns to continue the arduous enterprise on their own. Shortly afterwards the nuns discovered that a large part of the ancient library had been hidden in a cave above the monastery. The task of recovering these books, however, was daunting. When the leading nun was summoned to Lhasa to attend a patriotic education meeting for representatives of religious communities, she became acquainted with the representative of the monastery of Palmo Chöding in the nearby area of Porong.[32] Eventually she mentioned the books in the cave, asking for help. The monk responded readily. The books had to be rescued. The fact that he was made aware of scriptures threatened by total destruction emanated a moral imperative. Together with a nomad who had been at the centre of the revival of the Bodongpa tradition at Porong Palmo Chöding (Spo/Spong rong dpal mo chos sdings) he went to Trakar Taso. They

[30] Ngadag Lhatsun Rinchen Namgyal (Mnga' bdag Lha btsun rin chen rnam rgyal, 1473–1557) was a disciple of Tsangnyon Heruka (Gtsang smyon He ru ka) and was instrumental in the establishment of the Trakar Taso monastery. An outline of his life can be found in Smith (1969: 25–26) and a discussion of his printing activities at Trakar Taso in Clemente (2007: 121–60). A text by Trakar Chökyi Tulku (Brag dkar chos kyi sprul sku) suggests that Ngadag Lhatsun was the son of Thri Künga Namgyal De (Khri Kun dga' rnam rgyal lde) or Thri Sherab Palsang (Khri Shes rab dpal bzang; see Ehrhard 2004: 360). These were the sons of Thri Namgyal De (Khri Rnam rgyal lde), the famous king of Gungthang and brother of Chökyi Drönma, who had been one of the main sponsors of Tsangnyon Heruka. This would be consistent with the local perception that Ngadag Lhatsun Rinchen Namgyal was a member of the royal family and had thus the titles *ngadag* (*mnga' bdag*) and *lhatsun* (*lha btsun*). It is possibly significant that Trakar Taso is located on the hill immediately north of Shag where Chokyi Dronma spent her childhood and accomplished most of her early deeds (see Diemberger 2007: 152ff, 343).

[31] During the Cultural Revolution he spent three years in jail and was rehabilitated after 1978. Thanks to his intellectual skills and the respect he commanded among the local population in the 1980s and early 1990s he was repeatedly appointed as the head of Dzongkha (Rdzong dga') municipality.

[32] Porong used to be a principality between Gungthang and southern Latö. It hosts a nomadic community, which has been very active in reviving its traditions (see Diemberger 2002: 33–58).

climbed the cliff above the monastery and retrieved the books from the cave. With great sadness, they realised that many were partially or completely rotten. Nevertheless, the nuns readily sheltered the books, or whatever was left of them, on shelves in the main chapel where they joined other manuscripts, prints and printing blocks. These books and book-fragments started to tell a new story of survival and miraculous rescue to the community of the believers and the pilgrims visiting the monastery. They had started to tell a story by their sheer presence, even if many of them could no longer be read.

Although the books were important as ritual objects, their content could not be neglected. The monk and the nomad from Porong produced a preliminary list. However they then turned to another group of scholars for a more refined work: the Paltseg Research Institute[33] in Lhasa. Thus another book-centred network had to be mobilised in the name of the retrieved scriptures. Responding to the request for help, one of the scholars of the Paltseg research institute went to Trakar Taso with the nomad from Porong, and together they prepared a preliminary catalogue. This is now about to be published among the volumes produced by the Paltseg research institute, which has already published the catalogue of Drepung ('Bras spungs) monastery[34] and a number of rare books of different traditions.

The Paltseg Research Institute hosts a group of scholars dedicated to mapping collections that have survived the Cultural Revolution. Nicknamed 'the flying cataloguing commandos' by the curator of the Tibetan collection at the British Library,[35] they have been able to carry out remarkable operations by liaising with monastic communities and local authorities throughout Central Tibet. Their main centre is based in Lhasa, while branches are located in other parts of Tibet (see Bla ma 'Gro 'dul rdo rje 2009: 43–54). The main centre has recently acquired the status of a non-profit organisation (Ch. *shiye danwei*), after a long

[33] dPal brtsegs bod yig dpe rnying zhib 'jug khang, literally 'the Paltseg Institute for Research in Ancient Tibetan Books', named after the famous translator Kaba Paltseg (Ka ba Dpal rtsegs).

[34] The Drepung Catalogue provides a concise but impressive photographic documentation of the work involved in the cataloguing project: heaps of disordered leaves, neatly ordered piles of books and the retrieval of beautiful highlights.

[35] Burkhard Quessel coined this fitting nickname during one of his visits to Tibet where he saw how the scholars of the Paltseg Research Institute swiftly mobilised and trained groups of monks in monasteries as well as drop-outs from the education system and were thus able to complete their remarkable operations.

legal procedure, but was originally established as a private ‘company’ (Ch. *gongsi*) and the same is true for the branch offices. The strategic choice of establishing ‘commercial’ companies for what is clearly a cultural, ‘non-profit’ operation defies conventional international vocabulary but is perfectly rational in a context in which economic enterprises can use spaces inaccessible to other forms of organisation, as official NGOs are usually under the umbrella of the Communist Party.[36] The morality that drives the scholars and their trainees, however, is clearly a Buddhist one and revolves around the rescue and propagation of the Buddhist scriptures. They are in many ways similar to Chökyi Drönma, as she discovered and restored the set of canonical commentaries produced by her ancestor. Although the books published by the Paltseg research institute have recently come on the market, the operation remains primarily non-profit oriented and the income from the sale is considered as a contribution towards expenses. Religious patronage from Tibet and mainland China is still one of the key factors that make this operation viable, recalling the ancient monastic printing houses.

In north-eastern Tibet, another network is engaged in a similar operation: the Ngagmang association,[37] which publishes and re-publishes books of the local Nyingma traditions (see Dhondup 2009: 15–42 and her forthcoming work). Like the Paltseg research institute this is a private initiative. It involves a large network of scholars and tantric priests, who retrieve ancient texts and publish them, while also engaging in religious training and research. The metaphor of the treasure-revealer and the rediscovery of texts as a means to revive an ancient legacy are particularly close to the Ngagmang, given its doctrinal affiliation.[38] In a work telling the history of their association (Lce nag tshang hum chen and Ye shes ’od zer sgrol ma 2004), leading members identify its ori-

[36] I mean organisations such as the TDF, Tibet Development Fund, which were established as official NGOs in the post-Mao era. The TDF had the Panchen Lama and Ngabo Ngawang Jigme (Nga phod Ngag dbang ’jigs med) as figure-heads but had important figures of the United Front of the Communist Party involved in its running. Despite the tensions between Buddhist and communist moralities, the cadres of this organisation have been able to carry out important restoration of religious sites and welfare projects.

[37] Sngags mang dpe tshogs, literally the ‘Ngagmang book association’. http://www.ngakmang.com/ (March 2009).

[38] They can be seen as an example of a wider phenomenon described by David Germano. He also noticed that “in addition to the widespread excavation of vast amount of artwork and texts secretly buried just a few decades ago in response to Chinese initiated repression of Buddhism, in eastern Tibet the Treasure movement revealing sacred scriptures and material items from a seemingly distant imperial past has been dramatically revitalised” (Germano 1998: 55).

gin in the early spread of the doctrine in imperial Tibet and describe their current operation as part of the "further spread of the doctrine". In the last couple of years the Ngagmang association has linked up with the Paltseg Research Institute and both have become part of a transnational effort to preserve and catalogue Tibetan collections around the world. They are examples of an increasing number of private networks that have emerged in the Tibetan areas of China for the preservation of Tibetan cultural heritage and Buddhist legacy, which run parallel to, and sometimes intersect or even combine with government-sponsored operations.

Another example of text retrieval is that of the collected works of Bodong Chogle Namgyal, the *dPal de kho na nyid 'dus pa*, which provides a remarkable story of how a collection of scriptures can be at the centre of a transnational effort involving several interlinked networks across the globe. In 1959, two sets of the collected works were taken to Nepal by the escaping nomadic community. On the way some loads were lost. However, the largest part of it was safely transported to Nepal and India and was eventually reprinted in the *Encyclopedia Tibetica series* (New Delhi 1969–1981). As the Buddhist revival began in Tibet, the reconstitution of the *opera omnia* of this polymath became the focus of several scholars based in different regions of Tibet, Nepal, India and other countries around the world. Those in Tibet have been trying to explore libraries and archives searching for the missing volumes; the scholars in exile have been trying to find an order in the already available collection, assessing copies of newly retrieved materials from Tibet and exploring other traditions that may have taken over Bodong Chogle Namgyal's spiritual legacy (see Diemberger 2007; Sudbury 2007).

All these networks that have emerged around preserving surviving collections of ancient scriptures and searching for anything that can still be found, restored, and catalogued increasingly use digital technologies in their operations. Manuscripts and block-prints get swiftly transformed into digital objects and collections can be browsed thanks to digital catalogues. As with the introduction of printing, a technological transformation serves the propagation of the Buddhist doctrine and, in a more secular perspective, the preservation of Tibetan cultural heritage. But how does this process affect the relationship between books and human beings?

V. Ancient scriptures in the digital era

When the modern re-print of the collected works of Bodong Chogle Namgyal first arrived at the monastery of Bodong E in 1997 there was palpable excitement. People wore their best clothing; women had their heads adorned with the ancient headgear typical of Tsang (Gtsang). Some were crying, some were rejoicing, some said: 'We have waited for over forty years for this moment!' The collected works arrived in the form of modern volumes. They contained the facsimile of the original set that had arrived in India in 1959 and that had been published in the *Encyclopedia Tibetica* series thanks to Gene Smith. Over a hundred books were divided among the villagers, who then carried them in procession to bless the fields and the village. The ritual was ancient but the books had a new, different shape. As everybody knew that these were the collected works of their beloved master, this was not a problem. The content and the narrative that went with them empowered the books as embodiment of the master and as such they had the power to bless. After the procession, the books were placed on the altar in the monastery from where they keep emanating their blessing power.

The shape of the book, as a ritual object, did not matter too much on that occasion. However as a ritual object a book in the traditional *pothi* format (*dpe cha*) is clearly preferred and this is why *pothi* format books are still produced with modern technologies. Modern books (*deb*) may have the same content, but are considered a less desirable surrogate of the ancient scriptures. They evoke a different idea of the book, a different process of production, a different usage, a different morality and a blurring of the boundary between sacred and secular. Modern shaped books are less likely to be carried around the fields, to be handled with the same care and to be addressed with the same honorific language as those in *pothi* format. The relevance of the modern book is entirely dependent upon its content, and possibly the narrative that goes with it; it fails to evoke the ancient scriptures through its visual and physical impact. In the case of the collected works of Bodong Chogle Namgyal returning to Bodong E the message was so powerful that it overcame the ambiguities of the medium.[39] They were an acceptable ritual equivalent. This is not always the case.[40]

[39] They were hardbound books in a landscape format. They were neither a clear *pothi* format book (*dpe cha*) nor a conventional modern book (*deb*) but since they were

Recently, digital copies of early block-prints and manuscripts of the Bodong tradition housed in the UK were delivered to the main monasteries of this tradition. The monks rejoiced, but there was a certain amount of uncertainty concerning the handling of the CDs that contained the sought-after texts. Fortunately a print-out made the content immediately visible. The transformation of texts into digital objects definitely presents a challenge to the traditional understanding of the book. I have not yet seen CDs or DVDs carried around to bless fields, although I have seen them on Tibetan altars. In the case of a digital object, its value is based on a content that is not immediately recognisable. Only a full appreciation of the technology on which it rests makes the object recognisable as sacred. Once recognised, however, the digital facsimile on screen provides a sense of closeness to the original object, which exceeds that of any conventional reprint. This appreciation might still be difficult in remote monasteries, but has been creatively achieved in the operations of recovery and cataloguing of ancient scriptures mentioned above.

The scholars of research centres such as the Paltseg or the Ngagmang provide a remarkable blend of the secular and the sacred; of modern technologies and traditional religious scholarship and devotion. Like Chökyi Drönma they handle the books they lovingly restore with great care, repeating ancient gestures of wrapping and unwrapping, ordering folios, piling up volumes. Scanning and inputting texts in computers has become part of the same routine, in the same spirit.[41] They produce facsimile editions of ancient scriptures, critically edited volumes, catalogues, scholarly studies and collections of modern writings; they publish modern books but they also publish books in the traditional *pothi* format. They combine Buddhist scholarly approach with the one of modern research and cultural preservation. In general they

bound and had pages their physical appearance suggested that they fell more into the second category, even though the content suggested otherwise.

[40] A Tibetan friend from eastern Tibet told of his grandfather who used to have a library with books ordered in different ranks in relation to their physical appearance: old *pothi* format books were at the top, followed by newer ones of the same format, followed by Tibetan books in a modern Western format, and last came Chinese books and books in other languages. Even though modern books had the same content as some *pothi* format ones, they were not perceived in the same way.

[41] In Bhutan I saw a similar project, transnationally related to the same network of people, where prayers preceding each digital photographing session had become part of the regular project routine.

seem to privilege the content over the rituality of books, but this is still present. Their operations are often integrated into the routines of the monastic or priestly communities they cooperate with, for which they are an extraordinary source of knowledge and scholarship. Not only are their operations based on an intrinsically Buddhist morality, their practices combine different approaches that can be experienced differently by every individual involved. I saw a nun reciting an ancient text while she was typing it into the computer. This activity was clearly part of her religious practice. Next to her, a young student was carrying out the same activity, revealing a relationship towards the book more similar to that taught in the modern schooling system. Both seemed aware of the Buddhist framework within which they were operating, but they related to it in different ways. In the same way, the digital resources and the conventional publications produced by these research institutes are used by monks, nuns, tantric priests, religious laity and modern scholars according to very different modalities. What is the impact of the new mediums on these producers and users of texts? They seem to facilitate the propagation of scholarship and blessing, but the unintended or unanticipated consequences of this technological transformation, the 'message in the medium' indicated by Marshall McLuhan (2001 [1964]), are largely yet to be assessed—something that will probably be achievable only when information and fieldwork conditions in Tibet make it possible to explore its scale and multifarious contexts.

In general terms, the possibility of separating object from content offered by digital technologies has enabled the reckoning and assembling of disrupted collections, even across national boundaries (Diemberger and Karma Phuntsho 2009). Books retrieved in Tibet have become accessible to the Tibetan population and to the international community of scholars while Tibetan materials preserved in various institutions around the world have become increasingly accessible to Tibetan scholars and monasteries in Tibet. The possibility of collecting a vast amount of digital objects in limited space inspired the, possibly utopian, wish of a comprehensive global Tibetan textual record towards which a multitude of local and transnational projects are working. The uncertain reliability and sustainability of digital archiving in time, problems surrounding the definition of shared standards and possible conflicts among competing networks may perhaps represent the downside of this process. Beyond the unresolved issues, however, this

process has definitely led to the wider accessibility of materials and the retrieval of real treasures of Tibetan culture.

Among the sensational finds brought to light by the scholars of the Paltseg Research Institute is a *Prajñāpāramitasūtra in 100,000 verses* described as *Khri lde srong btsan thugs dam bla 'bum* claiming thus that it belonged to and was used for personal practice by the Tibetan emperor Thride Songtsen (Khri Lde srong btsan), alias Senaleg (Sad na legs, 798–815) (see Shes rab bzang 2009: 55–72). The book, retrieved in Drepung in 2003, gives not only the name with which Senaleg is mentioned in dynastic sources, but also details about its production. It also presents the two circles with string holes, typical of very early manuscripts, and a writing form with dynastic features (which in themselves are not sufficient elements for its dating but strongly support it). The label given to the text, *bla 'bum*, seems to indicate that it was a piece of the emperor personal property of a particular spiritual value.[42] Beyond the historical attribution, which is currently being assessed, the significance of the book was increased by the fact that it was a relic that made its ancient imperial owner present together with the original message of the Buddha. It reflected his distributed personhood and thus acted on people who were aware of the significance of his Buddhist imperial legacy. This book has now been scanned. Will the text in its digital version also be propagating the blessing of the Buddha, its imperial owner and all those who have handled it since? Looking at the energy devoted by the young scholars to the operation that brought it to light, digitised it and made it accessible, it definitely seems to do so. Like the mark left by Tsongkhapa's tooth on the clay lumps, the digital image seems to carry some of the original blessing, albeit in a reduced form. And it can be much more widely distributed. It can make people do things in its name and inspires a sense of awe and respect as the trace of a powerful relic. The gestures with which this digital object is handled, however, also reflect the world from which this technology came and its contagious enchantment with technology. The rituality associated with the text in this format can thus be seen as part of a developing

[42] The term *bla 'bum* flags this book as a particular sacred object. For a detailed explanation, see Shes rab bzang po 2009: 55–72 . This title may also relate to what Samten Karmay has translated as 'soul' (*bla*), a concept that reflects pre-Buddhist origins—a jewel such as the 'soul-turquoise' (*bla g.yu*) can be the seat of an individual 'soul', topographical features like lakes (*bla mtsho*) or mountains (*bla ri*) can be the seat of the 'soul' of entire communities and their territories (Karmay 1998: 310ff).

synthesis between the sacredness of the book and the secular roots of the medium.

From the brief glimpses that I have had into the complex process of Buddhist revival, I feel that sacred scriptures in a digital medium still seem to have the power to transmit Buddha's message, bring people together and, at times, to promote ritual creativity. In a transnational context, one can download digital prayer-wheels from the web and DVDs can be recognised as prayer-wheels spinning at the highest speed, setting sacred texts in motion and turning the Wheel of the Dharma. They can be seen as an ultimate propagation of blessing through technological innovation. Like printing, they can be seen as related to the ancient Buddhist custom of the distribution of relics and the idea that text can function as presence of the Buddha or of later Buddhist personalities. Once recognised, the digital message seems to be able to carry at least some of the blessing of the original object. It can therefore be endowed with its power and agency reflected in the multifarious ways in which it can do things to people and can be integrated into pre-existing ritual practices.

In the context of the Buddhist revival in post-Mao Tibet, books as ritual objects and vessels of teachings provide a powerful example of how ritual[43] can be both conservative and immensely creative. This is particularly true and significant if the notion of ritual is taken in its broadest sense to include the multifarious ritualised behaviours with which human beings relate to objects, spaces and times that are relevant to their life. In a world where everything is changing, ritual, through repetition,[44] evokes memories of an experienced or narrated world that preceded the upheavals of the Democratic Reforms and the Cultural Revolution. Ritual can thus help to create continuity with the past, integrating its moral authority, making use of the new opportunities and redefining them into more familiar categories. At a time in which Tibetan culture is perceived as threatened by a modernist secularising project imposed from outside, ritual is one of the devices through

[43] In Tibetan *cho ga*, i.e. 'ceremony, rite, method of doing a thing'.

[44] Repetition is an important feature in ritual and recognising different things as equivalent, i.e. as adequate substitute of an originally required element—can be an important part of ritual adaptation. This makes it possible to create the feeling of re-enactment and continuity. As Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw have shown, "ritualised action is not only in store for us, it is also in store *in us*" (1994: 260) and may evoke culturally patterned emotions.

which Tibetans can integrate and take advantage of innovations, making them part of a Tibetan vision of the future—or, more precisely, a vision that transcends ethnic divides in a truly Tibetan Buddhist perspective.[45]

Bibliography

Tibetan Sources

Biography of Chökyi Drönma, *Ye shes mkha' 'gro bsod nams 'dren gyi sku skyes gsum pa rje btsun ma chos kyi sgron ma'i rnam thar*. Incomplete manuscript of 144 folios.

Bla ma 'Gro 'dul rdo rje 2009. Recent discoveries of Tibetan manuscripts (in Tibetan). *In* H. Diemberger and Karma Phuntsho (eds) *Ancient Treasures, New Discoveries. Sharing materials which have recently come to light.*Volume of the Proceedings of the 11th Seminar of the International Association of Tibetan Studies, Königswinter 2006. Andiast: IITBS GmbH.

Collected Works of Bodong Chogle Namgyal, dPal de kho na nyid 'dus pa, 1969–1981. Edition of the collected works of Bodong Chogle Namgyal, 137 vols. New Delhi: Tibet House Library.

Dba' bzhed, 2000. Facsimile and translation of the Tibetan text by Pasang Wangdu and Hildegard Diemberger. Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften.

Drepung Catalogue, 'Bras spungs dgon du bzhugs su gsol ba'i dpe rnying dkar chag. 2004. Dpal rtsegs bod yig dpe rnying zhib 'jug khang. Beijing: Mi rig dpe skrun khang.

Deb ther sngon po, 'Gos gzhon nu dpal, Deb ther sngon po, 1985. Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang (The National Press of Sichuan). *The Blue Annals* 1988 [1949]. Trans. G. Roerich. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Gung thang rgyal rabs, Gung thang rgyal rabs by Rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu, Bod kyi lo rgyus deb ther khag lnga, 1990. Lhasa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang.

Lce nag tshang hum chen and Ye shes 'od zer sgrol ma, 2004. *Reb kong sngags mang gi lo rgyus phyogs bsgrigs*. Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long, 1981. Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

Shes rab bzang po 2010. Btsan po khri lde srong btsan gyi thugs dam bla 'bum ngo sprod zhu ba (798–815). *In* H. Diemberger and Karma Phuntsho (eds) *Ancient Treasures, New Discoveries. Sharing materials which have recently come to light.*Volume of the Proceedings of the 11th Seminar of the International Association of Tibetan Studies, Königswinter 2006. Andiast: IITBS GmbH.

[45] I am referring here to the fact that these operations count on support also from ethnic Chinese devotees. Buddhist lamas have historically played an important role in mediating conflicts between communities and across ethnic divides; see Shinjilt (2007: 337–62); Pirie in this volume.

Sources in other languages

Appadurai, A. (ed.) 1986. *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

—— 1988. *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Barrett, T. 2008. *The Woman who Discovered Printing*. Yale: Yale University Press.

Bawden, C. 1968. *Modern History of Mongolia*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson.

Bentor, Y. 1995. Literature on consecration (*Rab gnas*). *In* J. Cabezón and R. R. Jackson (eds) *Tibetan Literature, Studies in Genre*. Ithaca/New York: Snow Lion Publications.

Clarke Warren, H. 1984. *Buddhism in Translation*. New York: Atheneum.

Clemente, M. 2007. Colophons as sources: historical information from some Brag dkar rta so xylographies. *Rivista di Studi Asiatici II*, 2007, 121–60.

Conze, E. 1994 [1973]. *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines and its Verse Summary*. Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications.

Delaplace, G. and V. Micoud 2007. Les usages sociaux de la photographie en Mongolie : questions de méthode", no. 13, June 2007, *ethnographiques*. org.

Diemberger, H. (2002) The people of Porong and concepts of territory. *In* K. Buffetrille and H. Diemberger (eds), *Territory and Identity in Tibet and the Himalaya*. Leiden: Brill.

—— 2007. *When a Woman Becomes a Dynasty: The Samding Dorje Phagmo of Tibet,* New York: Columbia University Press.

Diemberger forthcoming. Transforming technologies and Buddhist books: debates surrounding literary artefacts in contemporary Tibet. Paper presented at the 12th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies,Vancouver 2010

Diemberger H. and Karma Phuntsho 2009. *Ancient Treasures, New Discoveries, Sharing materials which have recently come to light*. Volume of the Proceedings of the 11th Seminar of the International Association of Tibetan Studies, Königswinter 2006. Andiast:IITBS GmbH.

Ehrhard, F. K., 2000. *Early Buddhist Block Prints from Mangyul Gungthang*. Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute.

—— 2004. *Die Statue und der Tempel des Ārya Vati bzang-po*. Wiesbaden: Dr Ludwig Reichert Verlag.

Eisenstein, E. 1993. *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gell, A. 1998. *Art and Agency, an Anthropological Theory*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Germano, D. 1998 Remembering the dismembered body politic of Tibet. *In* M. Goldstein and M. Kapstein (eds) *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet*. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press.

Gombrich, R. 1971 *Precept and Practice*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

—— 1988. *Theravada Buddhism*. London: Routledge.

Hamayon, R. 1990. *La chasse à l'âme. Esquisse d'une théorie du chamanisme sibérien,* Nanterre: Société d'éthnologie.

Humphrey, C. forthcoming. *Mergen Monastery and the fate of Mongolian Buddhism*, (working title).

Humphrey, C. and J. Laidlaw 1994 *The Archetypal Actions of Ritual: A Theory of Ritual Illustrated by the Jain Rite of Worship*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Ingold, T. 2007. *Lines, a Brief History*. London: Routledge.

Jacoby, S. 2007. Consorts and Revelation in Eastern Tibet: the Autobiographical

Writings of the Treasure Revealer Sera Khandro (1892–1940). Ph.D. thesis, University of Virginia.

Jackson, D. 1983. Notes on two early printed editions of Sa-skya-pa Works". *The Tibet Journal* 8(2), 3–24.

Kapstein, M. 2006. *The Tibetans*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Karmay, S. 1998, 2005. *The Arrow and the Spindle,* vols. I and II. Kathmandu: Mandala Publications.

McLuhan, M. 2001 [1964] *Understanding Media*. Oxford/New York: Routledge Classics.

Ong, W. 1982. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the World*. London: Methuen.

Pieke, F. 2007. Market Leninism: party schools and cadre training in contemporary China. BICC *Working Papers Series* no. 3, August 2007. http://bicc.banksidesystems.net/WorkingPapers/FrankPieke/

Sagant, P. 1990. Les tambours de Nyishang (Népal) : rituel et centralisation politique. In *Tibet, civilisation et société*. Paris: Éditions de la Fondation Singer-Polignac.

Sanderson, A. 2008. Versatility of means: the transformation of the Śaiva cults of Bhairava and the goddess in the Buddhism of the Yoginītantra. Paper given at the Circle of Tibetan and Himalayan Studies, March 14, 2008.

Schaeffer, K. 2009 *The Culture of the Book in Tibet*. New York:Columbia University Press

Shinjilt 2007. Pasture fights, mediation, and ethnic narrations: aspects of the ethnic relationship between the Mongols and Tibetans in Qinghai and Gansu. *In* U. Bulag and H. Diemberger (eds) *The Mongolia-Tibet Interface*. Leiden: Brill.

Smith, E. G. 1969. Preface. In *The Life of the Saint of Gtsaṅ.* Delhi: Sata Pitaka Series.

Sørensen, P. 1994. *The Mirror Illluminating the Royal Genealogies*. Translation of *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me loṅ*, Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag.

—— 2007. Restless relic—The Ārya Lokeśvara icon in Tibet, symbol of power, legitimacy and pawn for patronage. *In* B. Kellner, H. Krasser, H. Lasic, M.T. Much and H. Tauscher (eds) *Pramāṇakīrtiḥ. Papers dedicated to Ernst Steinkellner on the Occasion of his 70th Birthday*. Part 1. Wien: Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde 70.1. Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien Universität Wien: 857–85.

Steinkellner, E. 2006.The Buddhist tradition of epistemology and logic (*tshad ma*) and its significance for Tibetan civilisation. *In* A. Gingrich and G. Hazod (eds) *Der Rand und die Mitte*. Vienna: Verlag der OeAW.

Strong, J. 2004. *Relics of the Buddha.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Sudbury, J. 2007. An Enigmatic Renaissance: The Revival of the Bodongpa Tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. D. Phil thesis, University of Oxford.

Tucci, G. 1955. The sacred character of the kings of ancient Tibet. *East and West* 6(3), 197–205.

Tuladhar-Douglas, W. forthcoming. Technologies are busting with implicit intentions: the case of writing. Paper given at the conference *Subversion, Conversion, Development—Public Interests in Technologies*, Cambridge 24–26 April 2008. To be published in the proceedings.

van der Kuijp, L. 1993. Two Mongol xylographs (*Hor par ma*) of the Tibetan text of Sa skya Paṇḍita's Work on Buddhist logic and epistemology. *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 16(2), 279–98.

Fig. 1: The return of the collected works of Bodong Chogle Namgyal, reprinted in India, to Bodong E monastery (photo: Maria Antonia Sironi)

Fig. 2: Books are carried around in a procession to bless the fields in Gunsa (North-eastern Nepal)(photo: Maria Antonia Sironi)

Fig. 3: Digitising Tibetan texts, Paltseg Research Institute (photo: Stephen Hugh-Jones)

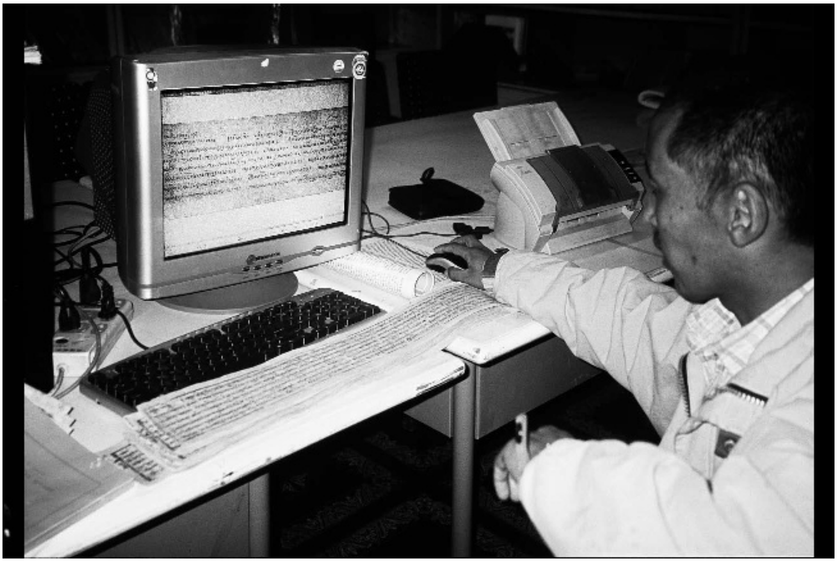


Fig. 4: Digitising Tibetan texts, Paltseg Research Institute (photo: Hildegard Diemberger)

Fig. 5: Karma Phuntsho is wrapping a book in a piece of cloth, its ‘robe’ (photo: Hildegard Diemberger)

Fig. 6: Wooden blocks and recently retrieved books at Trakar Taso monastery (Photo: Stephen Hugh-Jones)

Fig. 7: Trakar Taso monastery (Photo: Hildegard Diemberger)

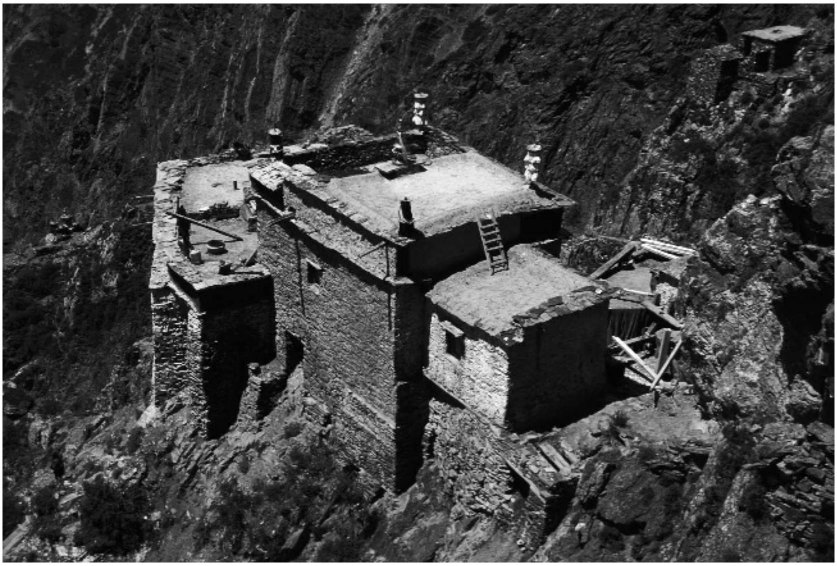


Fig. 8: Trakar Taso monastery (Photo: Charles Ramble)

Fig. 9: The statue of Lhatsun Rinchen Namgyal at Trakar Taso monastery (photo: Stephen Hugh-Jones)

THE USE OF THE RITUAL DRAWING OF LOTS FOR THE SELECTION OF THE 11TH PANCHEN LAMA

FABIENNE JAGOU
ÉCOLE FRANÇAISE D'EXTRÊME-ORIENT

bian chang mo ji : however long the whip may be, it does not reach the horse's breast

The *sprul sku* (*sprul pa'i sku*) is the worldly manifestation of Buddhahood, which is said to be generated by compassion and wisdom. The principle of conscious rebirth is considered to have appeared in Tibet during the second half of the 12th century (van der Kuijp 2005: 29). At the same time, Tibetan Buddhists developed a very sophisticated search system which allowed them to find the reincarnation of an accomplished yogi or a great master of Buddhist philosophy. This *sprul sku* phenomenon began with Karma Pag shi (1206–1283), the second Karma hierarch of the Karma sect of the Bka' brgyud school, who seems to have recognised himself, then to have been recognised by his disciples, as the reincarnation of Dus gsum mkhyen pa (1110–1193) and then, finally, that of Avalokiteśvara. Considering the evident advantage of the principle of conscious rebirth which guaranteed the continuity of the Karma bka' brgyud, the other Tibetan Buddhist orders were not slow to imitate them and to adopt the same mode of succession. Such is the case of the Dge lugs pa school to which the lineages of the Dalai Lamas and the Panchen Lamas belong. Nevertheless, not all schools adopted this system and, for example, the Sa skya school chose an uncle-to-nephew transmission.

The process of searching out and determining an incarnation is complex and can be understood at different levels. It remains difficult to determine if this is a matter of one or several rituals that follow one another in an orderly way or rituals carried out simultaneously by different persons. It seems obvious, however, that two types of ritual are practised: on one hand, one or several rituals related to Tibetan

Buddhism and to tradition; on the other, one or several others adopted in the course of the development of Tibetan political history and Sino-Tibetan relations.

Among the Tibetan traditional rituals which allow the reincarnation of a great Buddhist master to be selected, the first stage consists of choosing several children who could be the reincarnation of the dead master. With this aim, the close disciples of the deceased interpret the indications left by their master in his lifetime. They then consult the oracles and recite incantations by the lake Lha mo bla mtsho (located near Lhasa) renowned for the quality of the visions it elicits. Finally, they proceed to divinations.

In the second stage, from the preselected children, the most accomplished reincarnation of the deceased can be determined. The children are subjected to a test which consists of recognising, in a mix of objects, items that belonged to the previous incarnation.

In the particular cases of the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama, the rule requires that, alternately and according to their age, each participates in the search for the other's reincarnation by virtue of the special master-disciple relationship that unites them.[1]

In the selection of the 11th Panchen Lama (the 10th Panchen Lama died in 1989) China refused the 14th Dalai Lama (born in 1935), traditionally invested with this power, the right to participate in the search. However, several children from inside and outside Tibet were presented to him as possible reincarnations of the 10th Panchen Lama. The Dalai Lama then carried out the various tests required by tradition[2] and the results of these tests, carried out in Tibet and India, led to the selection of twenty-five children. In Tibet, each child was subjected to the test of recognising objects that belonged to the 10th Panchen Lama, and the 14th Dalai Lama was informed of the findings of the investigations. He then carried out the tests of divination by the so-called 'dice' method using photographs of the different children.[3] Then he repeated-

[1] The relationship that unites the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama began in the 16th century when the 4th Dalai Lama (1589–1617) chose Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan as his spiritual master and conferred upon him the title of Panchen Lama. This link was reinforced when the Panchen Lama participated for the first time in the search for the reincarnation of the 4th Dalai Lama.

[2] Statement of His Holiness the Dalai Lama on the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama, Dharamsala, Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 14 May1995.

[3] The so-called 'dice' method consists of embedding pieces of paper with the names of the candidates in balls of grilled flour (*rtsam pa*), placing them in a bowl,

ly performed various exercises of prediction. In every attempt, the name of Dge 'dun chos kyi nyi ma (born on April 25 1989)[4] stood out.[5] And, on May 14 1995, the 14th Dalai Lama, the Tibetan spiritual and temporal leader in exile in India since 1959, recognised this boy, born into a nomad family in Lha ri district of Nag chu prefecture in Central Tibet, as the reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Lama.

On their side, the Chinese authorities formed another search team made up of members of Bkra shis lhun po Monastery, the seat of the Panchen Lama in Tibet.[6] How this search unfolded remains obscure. This group was charged with preselecting the children who could be the reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Lama using traditional rites and then informing the Chinese government of its results—in fact, the results were first communicated to the Dalai Lama, who had been excluded from the search process by the Chinese authorities. Eventually, in accordance with the imperial edict of 1792, from the preselection the Chinese authorities proceeded to a drawing of lots (*Jinping cheqian*) which determined their choice.[7] The child chosen by the Dalai Lama was excluded from the draw. The Chinese authorities decided to recognise Rgyal mtshan nor bu (born on February 13 1990) as the 11th Panchen Lama.

From the Tibetan point of view, the procedure adopted by the Dalai Lama respected the Buddhist rules of the *Dge lugs* school. Indeed, at the same time, it had integrated the traditional religious rites and the participation of the Dalai Lama in the selection of the Panchen Lama. The ritual was therefore concluded.

From the Chinese point of view, the 14th Dalai Lama did not respect the imperial edict of 1792 because the test of drawing lots which, according to the Chinese authorities, marks the final decision, was absent from the selection process. By declaring unilaterally that he had found the incarnation of the 11th Panchen Lama, the Dalai Lama made

---

then reciting incantations until one of these balls escapes from the bowl and delivers the name of the chosen incarnation.

[4] Or less than nine months after the death of the 10th Panchen Lama, which occurred on 28 January 1989.

[5] *The Observer*, 21 May 1995.

[6] The monastery of Bkra shis lhun po belongs to the lineage of the Panchen Lamas. The Tibetans in exile in India have re-created the main monastic structures that existed in Central Tibet before 1959. Today, there are therefore two Bkra shis lhun po monasteries, one in Gzhis ka rtse in Central Tibet, and the other in Mysore, South India.

[7] As they announced in *The People's Daily*, 26 August 1989: 1.

the Chinese lose face—the Chinese having, after the death of the 10th Panchen Lama, insisted on not involving him in the search process.[8] This recognition of the 11th Panchen Lama by the 14th Dalai Lama aroused the indignation of the Chinese authorities, who did their best to show that the Dalai Lama's declaration was "illegal and invalid".[9]

To the "classic" Chinese reactions such as "the Dalai Lama seeks to divide the motherland and to hinder the economic development of Tibet",[10] with which initiatives of the Tibetan hierarch were usually met, new ones were added. In particular, the Chinese authorities declared: "the Dalai Lama shows contempt towards Tibetan Buddhism and seeks to disrupt the search process for the reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Lama".[11] Finally, their main criticism was the following: "the Dalai Lama respected neither the traditional religious rites, nor the historical conventions dating from 1792".[12]

The implementation of the drawing of lots in 1792 changed the rituals related to the search for a great Tibetan incarnation: a new ritual, this time a political one, was added to the previous procedures and from then on Manchu power played a part in the determination of great Tibetan incarnations in Tibet proper. The circumstances and the historical and political context in which this ritual could be developed and made acceptable for the Tibetan authorities will be analysed first. Then, the discussion will focus on the communication of this Manchu regulation to the Tibetan authorities and the communication by the Tibetan authorities to the Tibetans in charge of the determination of incarnations. This latter issue is important since it brought about an initial change in the nature of the ritual of drawing of lots, which shifted from being political for the Manchus (indeed an administrative measure) to political and religious for the Tibetans. Then, the various modifications that took place in the practice of this ritual between the 18th century and the beginning of the 20th will be presented. Finally, in view of the example of the recognition of the 11th Panchen Lama, the question of the legitimacy of this ritual in the current political context will be examined.

[8] On the refusal of the Chinese authorities to involve the Dalai Lama in the process of search for the reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Lama, see Shakya (1999: 441–44).

[9] *The People's Daily*, Foreign edition, 19 May 1995: 3.

[10] *Ibid.*, 20 May 1995 : 3.

[11] *Ibid.*, 24 May 1995 : 3.

[12] *Ibid.*, 19 May 1995 : 3.

I. The origin of the ritual of drawing lots

The Manchu empire of the 18th century was organised in a particular way. The Manchus had made China the centre of their empire with the Imperial House as supreme authority. The emperor Qianlong (1736–1796) had chosen to protect the culture, language and organisation of each of the countries bordering on China while recognising a different status for each of them (Millward 1998: 201–202). With Tibet, the religious dimension took on considerable value considering the fact that the Dalai Lama was at the same time spiritual and temporal ruler. In fact, from the spiritual point of view, the priest-patron relationship was again formed between the Dalai Lamas and the Manchu emperors from the time of the 5th Dalai Lama (1617–1682, r.1642–1682) and the emperor Shunzhi of the Qing (1638–1662, r. 1644–1662) when the Tibetan hierarch went to Peking in 1652 to meet the Manchu emperor, who was still a child. In this relationship, this bound one person to another, the first delivered Buddhist teachings to the second in exchange for protection, which took the form of such things as donations and military or administrative aid. From a spiritual point of view, the Manchu emperor became, then, the protector of the doctrine, the universal monarch or cakravārtin. However, because the protection applied at the same time to the person of the Dalai Lama, the *Dge lugs* pa school to which he belonged and the national government that he led, this relationship between the Dalai Lama and the Manchu emperor remained ambiguous. In fact, the emperor was going to have a role in the national policies and defence of Tibet thanks to his imperial commissioners (Man. *amban*, Ch. *zhu Zang dachen*) in order to protect the masters and monasteries of the *Dge lugs* school while, from a more pragmatic point of view, he sought to guarantee the security of the southwest border of his empire. However, the Manchus could not intervene without the agreement of the Dalai Lama or his government.

Each time a Dalai Lama established a priest-patron relationship with a Manchu emperor, from the spiritual point of view, he was considered by the Tibetan side as superior to the emperor and by the Manchus as the equal of the emperor (for example, Qianlong considered himself to be emanation of Mañjuśrī). From a temporal and Manchu point of view, he was placed in a position of inferiority.

It is by virtue of this relationship and in his capacity as protector that Qianlong was able to send an army into Tibet to repel the Gorkhas of Nepal.[13]

1. The events

The events which occurred at the end of the 18th century on the Tibet-Nepal border and led to the intervention (the utility of which was disputed)[14] of the Manchu armies, prompted the Qing, who were the protectors of the *Dge lugs* school, to regulate the practice of drawing lots and the choice of great Tibetan incarnations in Central Tibet.

The causes of the two wars against the Gorkhas (1788 and 1791–1792) are well known. The Tibetan recriminations against the Gorkha authorities regarding the diminishing silver content in the Tibetan coins struck in Nepal and the Nepalese refusal to respond positively are at the origin of the first one (1788). A border issue between Nepal and Sikkim and the Tibetan intervention in favour of Sikkim, plus the refusal of the Tibetans to pay, a second time, the tribute which they had undertaken to pay to the Nepalis in 1788 led to the second (1791–1792) and ended in the pillaging of the monastery of Bkra shis lhun po.[15] This latter Nepali raid on Tibet was, for a long time, attributed to the concupiscence of a member of the Panchen Lama's family, the 10th Zhwa dmar pa khutugtu Chos grub rgya mtsho of the Karma bka 'brgyud school (1738–1791).[16] We now know that the Zhwa dmar pa stayed in Nepal to settle the issue of the Tibetan currency and became involved in negotiations between the Nepalese and Tibetan authorities alongside the representatives of the Lhasa government.[17] The then 7th Panchen Lama (1782–1853), about ten years old at the

---

13 On the priest-patron relationship, see Ruegg (1995); for the modern period, see Tuttle (2005), and for the contemporary period, see Buffetrille (1989).

14 Richardson (1974: 34–36).

15 On these wars, see, for example, Richardson (1974: 27–39); Boulnois (1983).

16 *Qing shi chen zhuan gong*, 7 pian, "Fu K'anggan liezhuan", p. 061 (*sic*). I have already indicated that this version of the facts, which made the Zhwa dmar pa responsible for the second Gorkha incursion into Tibet, suited the Manchus well because this version of the facts released them from their responsibility, if not for the conflict, at least for the devastation of Bkra shis lhun po and their failure to protect the *Dge lugs* school, see Jagou (2007: 159, no15).

17 Ehrhard (2007: 118, 120 and 124–28).

time, had been moved to Lhasa for his protection and there was also some question of escorting the 8th Dalai Lama (1758–1804) and the 7th Panchen Lama to Amdo.[18] The Manchus took this foreign threat very seriously and decided to intervene in Tibetan internal affairs because they considered the Tibetan government inept. They developed a set of measures that put all Tibetan affairs in the hands of Imperial Commissioners and established a control mechanism in the process of recognising reincarnations, notably those of the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama, in the form of a system of drawing lots from the golden urn (*Jin ping*, abbreviation of *Jinbenbaping*; Tib.: *gser 'bum dkrug 'don*).

This imperial edict, probably drafted in Chinese and Manchu, gave rise to the working-out of a document written in Tibetan. Before discussing the mode of communication of this measure between the Manchu and Tibetan governments and the validity of this document, we should examine the content of the debates which surrounded its implementation and led to the writing of the first article of the document concerning the steps to follow in recognising an incarnation in Tibet.

2. The imperial report

It seemed unlikely to the emperor that several incarnated masters could be born into the same family. Following the Gorkha invasion, he became aware that the 10th Zhwa dmar pa khutugtu Chos grub rgya mtsho (whom the emperor blamed for the war) and the 'Brug pa khutugtu Blo bzang sbyin pa (the administrator of the Bkra shis lhun po monastery) were the brothers of the 6th Panchen Lama (1738–1781).[19] He was also surprised that the 8th Dalai Lama, the 4th Rje btsun dam pa khutugtu Blo bzang thub ldan dbang phyug (1775–1813) and the 7th Panchen Lama were all members of the Lha klu family.[20] Lastly, he

---

[18] Duojie Caidan (comp.), *Yuan yilai Xizang difang yu Zhongyang zhengfu guanxi dang'an shiliao huibian*. Beijing: Zhongguo Zang xue, 1993, vol. 3 (below noted *huibian*), Report of Baotai, 12/10/1791.

[19] Qianlong omits to mention that the niece of this Panchen Lama was also recognised as being the reincarnation of Rdo rje phag mo of the Bka 'brgyud pa school, see Zhou Runnian (1994: 30).

[20] *Huibian*, Order of the Grand Council to Fu K'anggan, 12/10/1792; Petech (1973: 39–40; 42; 55).

realised that even the son of Rdo ring Bstan ’dzin dpal ’byor (born in 1760), whose father was well known to the emperor for having participated in the negotiations with the Gorkhas, was presented as the potential incarnation (*hubilehan*; *khubilgans*) of the Sum pa khutugtu.[21]

The discussions that surrounded the writing of these measures seem to have begun in the middle of 1792. At the same time, Qianlong wrote and published his “Opinion on Tibetan masters” (*Lama shuo*), repeating one of his first propositions.[22] Indeed, after the death of Lcang skya Rol pa’i rdo rje (1717–1786), who had had Qianlong’s full confidence (Lcang skya khutugtu was notably charged with overseeing the search and selection of the 8th Dalai Lama),[23] the emperor found himself lacking when faced with the Tibetan preferences shown in the choice of incarnations. He had, therefore, to find another method.

The emperor suspected the oracles of being corrupt and of being at the origin of these choices.[24] Fu K’anggan, the general sent by Qianlong to Tibet in 1792 to repel the Nepali Gorkhas and to reorganise the Tibetan administration, had attended scenes of trances, and sharply criticised the oracles.[25] He considered them incapable of piercing their body and sinking a knife into their tongue and far from being as good as the shamans of Manchuria in terms of white magic.[26] According to him, the important thing for a potential incarnation was to be born intelligent and to be able to recognise objects that had belonged to his predecessors. He concludes: “There is, therefore, no need for magic words and, in fact, no need for any magic act either”.

However, for Qianlong, it was impossible to avoid dealing with the oracles for several reasons:

> If, in the end, the oracles are eliminated, it is inconceivable to add tests for all the intelligent children of Central Tibet and, however far we can go, children will be wrongly recognised and hundreds of potential incarnations will be determined. It is unthinkable. In the same way, when the

21 *Huibian*, Memorandum from Fu K’anggan to Qianlong, 06/12/1792.

22 *Huibian*, Order from Qianlong to the Grand Council for transmission to Fu K’anggan, 12/10/1792.

23 Berger (2003: 229, no 18).

24 He cites four oracles: La mo, Gnas chung, Skar ma shar and Bsam yas.

25 On Fu K’anggan, see Jagou (2007: 147–55).

26 *Huibian*, memorandum from Fu K’anggan to the Grand Council, 18/02/1793. It is an opinion that unquestionably represents the regulation of any religious practice on the territory of the Qing Empire and, in particular, trances, see *Da Qing lüli, juan* 6, Law against the heterodox arts of religious masters and wizards, cited by Stupar (1996: 175).

potential incarnations undergo the test consisting of recognising objects that belonged to their predecessor, and even if they carry it out successfully, this act is not immune to corruption either.[27]

3. *The ritual itself*

The emperor thus ordered that reliable oracles be called upon, and that supernatural means be used to determine the potential incarnations; there would then be a drawing of lots using an urn:[28]

> Henceforth the four Tibetan oracles, La mo, Gnas chung, Skar ma shar and Bsam yas, in accordance with the well-known writings and following the methods of the oracles (*jiang shen zhi fa*), after the death of the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama, will receive the order to determine the potential incarnations (*you genji zhi hubilehan*). If several incarnations are selected, their names and their day, month and year of birth will be written, each on a different piece of bamboo, which will then be deposited in a golden urn. Monks who know the texts will be chosen (*jianxuan*); they will recite prayers with sincerity for seven days. All the reincarnated masters must be informed and will gather in front of the Buddha; all of it will be observed and examined by the Manchu Imperial Commissioner residing in Tibet. Regarding the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama, they will have to choose each other considering the fact that they have a reciprocal bond of master to disciple. If the four oracles all agree on one single potential incarnation (Qianlong's note: in this case as well, there might be corruption), it will be necessary to write the candidate's name and day, month and year of birth on a piece of bamboo and to have another piece without writing, and then to deposit them both in the golden urn. It will then be necessary to recite prayers according to the *Dharma*. If the blank piece of bamboo is drawn, the potential incarnation whose name was written on the other piece of bamboo will be considered as not being the right person, because that would not help the *Dharma* and would not be to have found an incarnation. It will then be necessary to proceed to a new drawing of lots in order to prevent corruption and the occurrence of collusion. [The name and day, month and year of birth of the candidate] will be written in Manchu, Chinese and Tibetan on the pieces of bamboo, in order that everyone be informed and to avoid any confusion. In any instance of potential incarnation of a great master of Inner and Outer Tibet,[29] the Manchu Imperial Commissioner residing

[27] *Huibian, ibid.*

[28] *Huibian*, memorandum from Fu K'anggan to the Grand Council, 18/02/1793.

[29] Inner and Outer Tibet refer to the two Tibetan provinces of Dbus and Gtsang, each of which covers a territory differing in extent according to the borders recognised by the Qing emperor at different times; see Jagou (2010).

> in Tibet and the Dalai Lama will have to proceed to the drawing lots in accordance with the rituals, and then the selection must be approved by the emperor.[30]

We do not know if the Manchus were inspired by a practice of drawing lots that was already being used in Tibet. It seems, indeed, that this practice was common in politics when a choice was not unanimous. For example, in about 1673, the 5th Dalai Lama (1617–1682) had lots drawn to find a replacement for the regent Blo bzang mthu stobs (in office from 1669 to 1675).[31] Moreover, the assistant of Pho lha nas ('sovereign' of Tibet from 1728 to 1747) was chosen by drawing lots in 1723.[32] Furthermore, the Rwa sgreng regent (1912–1947) was also chosen by drawing lots.[33] It seems that this technique was commonly used in the monasteries of Amdo as soon as a decision regarding any matter had to be taken or for the choice of an incarnation.[34] It is also in this way that the abbots of Sman ri (Bonpo) were chosen.[35] This practice consisted of placing balls of *rtsam pa*—in which the pieces of paper bearing the names of the candidates had been embedded—in a bowl and performing incantations until one of the balls came out of the bowl. The paper was then unrolled and the person whose name was written on it was selected. It is also possible that the Manchus were inspired by the Chinese Buddhist practice consisting of placing several sticks, on which various verses are engraved, in an oblong container without a cover, questioning the Buddha, and shaking the container until a stick detaches itself from the bunch and provides its answer.

The motives of Qianlong were to avoid the corruption of the oracles and to protect the Dge lugs pa against the takeover of the future of reincarnation lineages and their possessions, and thus to avoid the concentration of power in the hands of only one or a few Tibetan families. For

[30] *Huibian*, Memorandum from Fu K'anggan to Qianlong, 07/11/1792.

[31] Richardson ([1980] 1998: 455–56) cited by Chayet (2005: 180, footnote 66).

[32] Petech ([1950] 1972: 81); Petech (1972: 94), cited by Chayet (2005: 180, footnote 65).

[33] After the death of the 13th Dalai Lama (1933), the National Assembly was unable to agree on the choice of a regent. Its members finally decided to use the "divine lottery" (*zan ril*). On 24 January 1934, the former abbot of Dga' ldan conducted the drawing of lots in the presence of the officials, abbots and other members of the assembly. The draw selected Rwa sgreng, who was officially appointed regent on 23 February 1934, see Goldstein (1989: 188–89).

[34] Interview with the late Yonten Gyatso, 1995.

[35] Per Kvaerne (1977: 91). I thank Per Kvaerne for this reference, but to date I have not been able to obtain access to this article.

this reason Qianlong added a final stage (the drawing of lots) to the various Tibetan traditional rituals which he refused to modify or to exclude. He thus exercised his role as protector of the Dge lugs pa by protecting the religious and esoteric part of the successive rituals and institutionalised the last test by imposing the presence of his representative in Lhasa during the drawing of lots. From a pragmatic point of view, the ritual was thus changed because a new step was put in place. However, the main change was the institution of a rule by a foreign actor in the subtle game of searching for a Tibetan incarnation, the process of which had been developed by Tibetans and for Tibetans. We shall now consider the way in which Tibetans received this new final step.

II. The Tibetans' reception

The legitimacy of the creation of the ritual of drawing of lots instituted by the Manchus in Tibet may be assessed by conducting two analyses: first, communications to the Tibetans at the time of the establishment of this measure; and secondly, the Tibetan reaction to the new measure.

1. The oral consultation

According to Chinese sources, Fu K'anggan (memorandum to Qianlong dated 29 November 1792) is definite: the Dalai Lama was consulted during the development of the twenty-nine article document, the first paragraph of which presents the new rules to be followed for the selection of reincarnated masters, and he accepted it on 16 October 1792. However, according to Chinese sources, again, it is clear that the golden urn intended for the Jo khang Temple left Peking before this 'consultation' on 10 September 1792 and arrived in Lhasa on 20 November 1792.[36] We can therefore justifiably doubt that the Dalai Lama was informed before the decision was taken in Peking.

This oral consultation—or rather, oral transmission—of the imperial decision, then, followed the written communication.

[36] *Huibian*, Order of Qianlong to the Grand Council, 26/9/1792 and report from Fu K'anggan to Qianlong, 12/01/1793.

2. *The written notice*

Fu K'anggan is considered to be the author of the 'Eighteen-point memorandum on the restoration of Tibet' (*zou Zang nei shanhou shi ba shi*).[37] However, these measures vary in number according to the sources.[38] For example, the 'Monograph on Central Tibet' (*Wei Zang tongzhi*) proposes a version with 102 articles in the 'Statutes' (*tiaoli*) section, with the title 'Memorandum on Imperial Commissioners and regulation approved by the Emperor' (*Qin ding zhangcheng ji dachen zouyi*).[39] The *Shengwu ji* summarises the proposals of Fu K'anggan and confines itself to the most important of them (the military presence, the establishment of equal powers between the Imperial Commissioner, the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama, and the appointment of Tibetan ministers).[40] The 'Compendium of Qing institutions and regulations' (*Qin ding da Qing huidian zeli*) notes twenty articles under the title 'Creation of the post of Imperial Commissioner in Tibet' (*Xizang she zhuzha dachen*).[41] It therefore clearly appears in the various Chinese compilations related to Tibet, dating from the 19th century, that importance is given to the enhanced role of the Manchu Imperial Commissioners in Tibet rather than to the institution of drawing lots for the choice of reincarnations.

The text of the *Lama shuo* is well known. Qianlong, having cited various dysfunctions, repeated his wish to protect the *Dge lugs* school by instituting the practice of drawing lots in the process of selecting incarnations.[42] Although the *Lama shuo* mentions Tibetan masters and was written in the four languages of the empire—Manchu, Chinese, Mongolian and Tibetan—on a stele erected in the Temple of the Eternal Harmony or Lamas' Temple (Yonghe gong) in Peking, it was addressed mainly to reincarnations of Mongol origin. Indeed, several examples of selected Mongol reincarnated masters, considered suspicious by the emperor, are cited there: Shireghtu khutugtu was the uncle of the prince

---

37 For example, *Qing shi liezhuan, juan* 26, f.19b.

38 Anne Chayet underlines that historians do not present this document as an act but rather as a series of measures taken in 1792 and 1793; see Chayet (2005: 129, footnote 13).

39 *Wei Zang tongzhi, juan* 12, f. 1a–5a.

40 *Shengwu ji, juan* 5, f. 14b–15b.

41 *Qin ding Lifan bu zeli, juan* 61, f. 1a–11a.

42 For a Chinese version of this text dated 13/12/1792, see *Wei Zang tongzhi*, "Tibetan masters" section, *juan* 5, f. 1a–4b.

Lha dbang rdo rje of Khalkha, Dakba khutugtu was the son of the prince Blo bzang rdo rje of the Alashan, Nom chos rje khutugtu was the son of the prince Bkra bshis yar 'phel of the Sizi tribe; and the potential incarnation of the *khuvilgaan* of Khan po nomonhan 'Jam pa'i rdo rje was the son of Tshe brtan rdo rje of the Tushetu.[43] And in the case of Mongol masters, the drawing of lots had to take place in the Temple of Eternal Harmony in Peking. It seems that there was no column identical to the one in Peking erected in Lhasa, where the drawing of lots had to take place in the presence of the Manchu Imperial Commissioner.[44] It was therefore necessary to find another means of communicating this measure to the Tibetans.

The diffusion of this measure, and of others, remains difficult to determine considering the confusion that reigns on this subject in the Chinese sources. These sources first mention two translations. The term "translation" implies that there had been an original version in Chinese or in Manchu. Now, it would seem that no Chinese or Manchu language version of the twenty-nine article document has been found in the archives.[45] Then, it is remarkable that two translations were made of the same document. The first one (the authors of which are not named) would have been brought to the attention of the Dalai Lama before being communicated to reincarnated masters, important monks and ministers of the Tibetan government.[46] The second was made by the services of the Manchu Imperial Commissioner's *yamen*. Its text was engraved, and then printed. It would be this version that was spread in Dbus and in Gtsang to inform the whole Tibetan population.[47] Finally, according to Chinese researchers, the first translation was duplicated and sent back to the Dalai Lama and to the regent nomonhan Ngag dbang tshul khrims (1721–1791) with the order to distribute it among the ministers and district officials for immediate and permanent application under the pretext that the first dispatch had been mislaid![48]

---

43 *Wei Zang tongzhi, juan* 12, f. 1a–5a.

44 Richardson (1974: 52).

45 Concerning the language used in the writing of the original document as well as the language of communication between the Manchu officials in Tibet and the Tibetans, and that of the letters exchanged between the Manchu officials in Tibet and the Court of Peking, see Jagou (2007: 152–58).

46 *Huibian*, memorandum from Fu K'anggan to Qianlong, 4/4/1793.

47 *Ibid*. This would be the document published in *A Collection of Historical Archives of Tibet*, although the reproduced version is handwritten. Actually, this notice was found in the Manchu Imperial Commissioner's *yamen* in Tibet in 1811, as indicated in the glued parts. For a description of these archives, see Chayet (2005: 138–40).

In each case, it was Fu K'anggan who made the preparations for the writing of the Tibetan version of a document that listed the various measures taken to reorganise Tibet. This Tibetan document, which in its original version did not have a title, is today called "Programme for the restoration of Tibet approved by the emperor". It attracted the attention of specialists in many respects.[49] It took up the new regulations, reorganising them into twenty-nine articles.[50] It seems, moreover, to have been drafted for the exclusive use of the Tibetans, because it does not exist in its Chinese version. We cannot, however, rule out the possibility that Manchu or Mongolian versions were written.[51] The first article of this document concerns the selection of great reincarnated Tibetan masters, including the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama. The translation is as follows:

> Regarding the recognition of the incarnations, once the results of the tests are certain and in accordance with the predictions of the four oracles, the dates of birth and names of the potential incarnations will be written on wooden tablets which will be placed in the golden urn provided by the Emperor. After monks, chosen for their erudition and realisation, have officiated for seven days in a row, the assembly of incarnated masters and the Manchu Imperial Commissioner will carry out the recognition before the representation of the Buddha [Jo bo]. And even in

[48] *Huibian*, vol. 3, p. 822 cited by Liao Zugui *et al.* (2004, 2: 34). This reference is however erroneous because I did not find it in the compilation. According to the authors, two Tibetan versions of the document were found in the archives: one in those of the Tibetan government, the other in those of the Manchu Imperial Commissioner's *yamen*. According to them, this last version would be the one kept in the *Collection of the documents of the water-ox year*. However, they do not specify the reference nor the Tibetan title. It is certainly *Chu glang wang shu tshur phul gyi deb gzhung* compiled in Chab spel Tshe brtan phun tshogs, *Bod kyi gal che'i rgyus yig cha bdams bsgrigs lo*, cited by Chayet (2005: 135, footnote 35).

[49] Chen Youxin (1996: 185–214); Liao Zugui *et al.* (2004, 2: 30–43; 2004, 3: 69–87; 2004, 4: 57–75); Chayet (2005: 125–45). For a complete list of the various published versions, cf. (Chayet 2005: 137, footnote 49). Chen Youxin presents the preparatory phases to the writing of the final twenty-nine article document thanks to the archives of the Qing dynasty and wonders about the one hundred and two article version of the same document drafted by Song Yun (1754–1835, Manchu Imperial Commissioner in Tibet from 1794 to 1799). Liao Zugui tries, on one hand, to determine which of the two Tibetan versions we have today is the official one and, on the other, to explain the absence of an original Chinese version; and Anne Chayet places the document in the context of the study of the Tibetan chancellery.

[50] This document has been recently published in *Bod kyi lo rgyus yig tshags gces bdus. Xizang lishi dang'an huicui. A Collection of Historical Archives of Tibet*, 1995, Beijing: Wenwu, plate 50.

[51] On the development of the document, see Jagou (2007).

> a case where the four oracles are unanimous about a recognition, a tablet bearing his name and another blank one will be placed in the urn. If the tablet without writing comes out, we will deem not to have the true incarnation and it will be necessary to look for another one. And also, in the determination of the emanations of the Victorious Ones who are like father and son [i.e., the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama] if the tablets are engraved in the three kinds of writing—Manchu, Chinese and Tibetan—everybody will have greater faith [in the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama so determined].

The Tibetan sources are hardly more loquacious. It is true that they are different (biographical) from those available in Chinese (mainly administrative) and, in comparison, extremely reduced.[52]

The autobiography of Rdo ring Bstan 'dzin dpal 'byor (b. 1760), which played an important role during the negotiations conducted between the Gorkhas and Tibetans in 1792, is silent on everything concerning the development and distribution of this document.[53] In fact, Rdo ring Bstan 'dzin dpal 'byor did not participate in its preparation because he was suspected by the Manchus of having collaborated with the Gorkhas and was held prisoner in Tibet before being sent to Peking.

The 8th Dalai Lama accepted the drawing of lots as the ultimate stage in the process of recognition of an incarnation. He therefore composed a prayer which consisted of making an appeal to the tutelary deity of the dead master, and which was composed to serve as a liturgical accompaniment to the ritual of the drawing of lots and to eliminate doubts about the authenticity of the new incarnation.[54]

Be that as it may, the information spread. Fathers Huc and Gabet, who were in Tibet from 1844 to 1846, half a century after the establishment of this measure, attest to it, without, however, giving the impression of having attended or heard of a particular case during their stay. They instead recall the new regulation ([1924] 1987: 313–14):

> When the Tale-Lama dies, or to speak Buddhickly, when he has laid aside his human envelope, they proceed to the election of his successor,

[52] The absence of Tibetan administrative documents can be explained by the fact that few Tibetan archive documents are published and it is near impossible to get access to the Tibetan government archives.

[53] *Dga' bzhi ba'i mi rabs kyi byung ba brjod pa zol med gtam gyi rol mo (= Rdo ring Paṇḍita'i rnam thar).* Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1987, 2 vols.

[54] *rGyal ba sku 'phreng brgyad pa 'jam dpal rgya mtsho'i gsung 'bum (Collected Works of the Eighth Dalai Lama Jampel Gyaltsho)*, Reproduced from a Lhasa Zhol edition preserved by the library of the Private Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Dharamsala, 2001, f. 528.

> in the following manner: Prayers are directed to be offered up, and fasts to be performed in all the Lamaseries. The inhabitants of Lha-Ssa especially, as being the most interested in the affair, redouble their zeal and devotion. Every one goes a pilgrimage round the Buddha-La and the "City of Spints". The Tchu-Kors are perpetually turning in everybody's hands, the sacred formula of the mani re-echoes day and night, in all the streets of the town, and perfumes are burnt in profusion everywhere. Those who think they possess the Tale-Lama in their family, give information of the belief to the authorities of Lha-Ssa, in order that there may be established, in the children indicated, their quality of Chaberons, authentically recognised as such. The candidates come to Lha-Ssa, and the Houtouktous of the Lamanesque states meet in assembly. They shut themselves up in a temple of the Buddha-La, and pass six days in retirement, fasting and praying. On the seventh day, they take a golden urn, containing three fish, likewise of gold, upon which they engraved the names of the three little candidates for the functions of the divinity of the Buddha-La. They shake the urn, the eldest of the Houtouktous draws out a fish, and the child whose name is thus designated by lot is immediately proclaimed Tale-Lama. He is then conducted, in great pomp, to the street of the City of Spirits, every one devoutly prostrating on his passage, and is placed in his sanctuary.[55]

Chinese sources, in particular the "Compendium of institutions and regulations of the Qing", allow us to assess the evolution of this first measure. It appears that in 1794, it became forbidden to look for incarnations in the families of the Dalai Lamas, the Panchen Lamas and Mongol aristocrats. The creation of new lineages of reincarnated masters was no longer authorised.[56] Furthermore, in 1824, it became impossible to look for an incarnation within the ordinary population.[57] The search could only be carried out among the Tibetan noble families.

From a pragmatic point of view, if this measure was followed with effect and if many reincarnated masters were chosen by means of drawing lots, it is nonetheless true that the ritual has undergone some changes in comparison with the rule introduced by Qianlong and the one communicated to the Tibetans.

As regards both important lineages of the Dge lugs school, the 10th (1816–1837), 11th (1838–1856) and 12th (1856–1875) Dalai Lamas and the 8th (1855–1882) and 9th (1883–1937) Panchen Lamas were chosen

[55] Régis-Evariste Huc, *Travels in Tartary, Thibet, and China*, Translated by W. Hazlitt, The Project Gutenberg e-book, p.109.

[56] *Qing huidian shili, Lifanyuan, juan* 975, *lama fenghao*, 1794: 1097–2.

[57] *Qing huidian shili, Lifanyuan, juan* 975, *lama fenghao*, 1824: 1097–2.

by drawing lots.[58] The 9th, 13th (1876–1933) and 14th (born in 1935) Dalai Lamas, as well as the 10th Panchen Lama (1938–1989)[59] were not, because the choice of child was unanimous. In the case of the 9th and 13th Dalai Lamas, the Manchu emperor was consulted and gave his approval, whereas in that of the 14th Dalai Lama, the authorities of Republican China were presented with a *fait accompli*.[60]

Reading the ceremonies of drawing lots used for the recognition of the Dalai Lamas and Panchen Lamas, we can derive some common features.[61]

The rite took place in the Hall of 'The complete victory over the three [levels] of the world [celestial, earthly and subterranean]' (*Gzims chung sa gsum rnam rgyal*) in the Potala Palace. Each time, the golden urn, which was kept in the Jo khang Temple, was taken to the Potala Palace. The Manchu Imperial Commissioner conducted the drawing of lots. The Dalai Lamas played a part in the search for the Panchen Lama and *vice versa*.

In the end Qianlong achieved his goal, which was to avoid numerous incarnated masters being recognised only in certain families.

In conclusion, the Manchus added the ritual of drawing lots from the golden urn in the process of selection of reincarnated masters to fight against what they considered to be two dangers: the corruption of the oracles and the monopoly of reincarnations in the same family. This ritual was accepted by the Tibetans because it came within the scope of a particular historical environment where the link between the Manchu emperor and the Tibetan spiritual and temporal leader fell within the priest-patron relationship that both had accepted, although each party defined this relationship in his own way. The modifications made in the execution of this ritual (in front of a portrait of the emperor rather than

[58] For an exhaustive list of reincarnated masters chosen by drawing lots, cf. Chen Qingying, Wang Xiangyun (under press: 11–49). I thank Wang Xiangyun for giving me a first draft of this article.

[59] The case of the recognition and enthronement of the 10th Panchen Lama remains distinctive. The 10th Panchen Lama was chosen by the Chinese Nationalists (in power from 1912 to 1949) who installed him in Sku 'bum before the Communist Chinese escorted him to the Bkra shis lhun po monastery in central Tibet. He was enthroned in 1952, without the approval of the Tibetans, because he had been selected by the Chinese without having passed the traditional Tibetan tests, see Shakya (1999: 35 and 112); Jagou (2001: 49–50).

[60] Goldstein (1989: 318–24).

[61] These conclusions are derived from the translations done by Chen Qingying, Wang Xiangyun (under press).

before a representation of the Buddha and with inscriptions exclusively in Manchu and Tibetan) and the assertion of the 8th Dalai Lama that this drawing of lots was instituted only through benevolence and for the good of the Buddhist teaching (*bstan pa kho na dgongs pa'i thugs bskyed 'ba' zhig gis*)[62] confirm this person-to-person bond between the Manchu emperors and the Dalai Lamas on one hand, and recognises the Manchu emperors as the guardians of the Buddhist doctrine on the other.

Today, such a relationship no longer exists. Although Peking participates in the reconstruction of Tibetan monasteries since the 1980s, this person-to-person relationship has disappeared. This relationship is now certainly built on spiritual masters or monks, but monks whose guardian or donor is the abstract entity of the Peking government.[63]

III. Its legitimacy today

In the present religious and political contexts, does this ritual of drawing lots have to be considered, from now on, part of the ritual of recognition of an incarnation (from China's point of view) or is it now part of history and *de facto* obsolete (from the Tibetan point of view)? Does the ritual have to remain fixed or, on the contrary, evolve to be in accordance with the political situation of the moment and/or with the political path each of the parties intends to follow?

Following the change from the Imperial regime to the Republican system (1912–1949) in China, the 13th Dalai Lama (1876–1933) broke all political ties with China by declaring the independence of Tibet in 1913. It is only after the creation of the Nanking government in China (1928) and the death of the Tibetan hierarch (1933) that relations were restored, the Republican authorities obtaining the authorisation of the Tibetan government to send an emissary to Lhasa to attend the funeral of the Dalai Lama and to leave two members of the mission there. In 1936, just as the 14th Dalai Lama was going to be recognised, the Chinese Republic again took up the measures enacted by Qianlong

---

[62] *rGyal ba sku 'phreng brgyad pa 'jam dpal rgya mtsho'i gsung 'bum (Collected Works of the Eighth Dalai Lama Jampel Gyaltsho)*, Reproduced from a Lhasa Zhol edition preserved in the library of the Private Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Dharamsala, 2001, folio 528.

[63] See Buffetrille (1989).

under the title: "The means of searching for reincarnations of Tibetan masters" (*Lama zhuanshi banfa*), the 4th article of which concerned the steps to be followed when the potential incarnations had been selected.

> Regarding the potential incarnations of Central Tibet, the members of the office of the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission in Lhasa and the Dalai Lama will write the names and the day, year and place of birth on ivory sticks, then place them in the golden urn in the Jo khang Temple, and then together conduct the drawing of lots.

Communist China (from 1949) abandoned of the policy of recognising reincarnate masters from the beginning of the 1960s until the end of the 1980s, when it began to recognise incarnations in Amdo, at Sku 'bum monastery in particular.

On the Tibetan side, can the traditions endure, considering the situation? Since the incorporation of Tibet into China, the Dalai Lama has been a refugee in India where he created a government in exile. The process of searching for a great Tibetan master like the Panchen Lama, in which the Dalai Lama participated, has been altered. In the case of the choice of the 11th Panchen Lama, as in that of the 17th Karmapa, the Dalai Lama's exile forced him to depend on people living in Tibet, if only for them to meet the children who might potentially be the reincarnations of the sought-after masters and inform him of the results. For his part, the Dalai Lama could only perform divinations on the basis of the information collected in this way and from the photographs of the children.

We might also wonder about the preservation of traditions (appealing to the oracles, the divinations, etc.) in the current context. As we have seen, the role of the oracles is important; for example, we do not know what happened to the La mo oracle, who was consulted during the search for Panchen Lamas and attached to that lineage. On this count, we can also suggest that the search is biased from the outset. Similarly, in the case of the 17th Karmapa, the disciples of his predecessor solicited the opinion of the Dalai Lama, although such consultation was not required by tradition.

Although this regulation of 1792 is not applicable in present-day China, considering the difference in the political situation between these two periods, it is important to note the contemporary breaches of this rule of 1792 and of its jurisprudence, since the Chinese authorities refer to it to justify their intervention in the selection of the 11th Panchen Lama.

The motives of the Manchu at the origin of the drawing of lots are no longer relevant: it seems that the oracles no longer exercise their traditional function[64] in the process, and no Tibetan family can aspire to power in present-day Tibet, where it is only Chinese authority that is exercised.

With regard to the regulation, the present personalities obviously do not have the same titles as those at the end of the 18th century (representative of the Chinese State Council, as opposed to the Manchus' Imperial Commissioner).

In the selection of the 11th Panchen Lama, the representative of the Chinese government did not conduct the drawing of lots himself as was the case under the Qing, but instead a monk officiated—Bome Qamba Lozhoi, head of the Tibetan branch of the Buddhist Association of China and member of the committee in charge of the selection and confirmation of the reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Lama.

Finally, contrary to the text of 1792 which stated that "the Dalai Lamas and the Panchen Lamas have to choose each other mutually", the help of the Dalai Lama was rejected.

The ceremony took place in the Jo khang Temple and not in the Potala Palace.

The drawing of lots took place before the statue of the Buddha as specified in the original text: it is difficult to imagine the drawing of lots being conducted before the portrait of a Manchu emperor or that of the President of the People's Republic of China!

If the motivation of the Chinese authorities had been to respect the edict of 1792, they could have adopted one of two solutions. Following the Dalai Lama's choice, they could have placed in the urn an ivory stick bearing the name of the child selected by the hierarch, along with a blank stick, and then conducted the drawing of lots. Alternatively, they could also have considered the child selected by the Dalai Lama not to be the only possible candidate. As such, they would have written his name along with those of the other children selected on ivory sticks and then conducted the drawing of lots.

In Central Tibet, China contributed to the recognition of two great masters: the 17th Karmapa and the 11th Panchen Lama. Although the two hierarchs belong to different lineages, each of them, in the Chinese

---

[64] Among the four oracles quoted by Qianlong, only Gnas chung lives in exile.

game, might serve Chinese interests in Tibet.[65] However, the Chinese attitude was different when it was a question of validating these incarnations. They accepted or rejected the intervention of the Dalai Lama according to their political interests regardless of the legal and imperial texts to which they referred to justify their action and condemn that of the Dalai Lama.

In the case of the 11th Panchen Lama, the Chinese authorities refused the participation of the Dalai Lama in the search process, rejected the child chosen by him and chose another, putting forward the reason that the Dalai Lama had not respected the 1792 edict and had pronounced his choice before the drawing of lots had been conducted. The consequences were extremely severe: members of the team searching for the reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Lama, appointed by the Chinese authorities, were arrested and imprisoned (Jagou 2001: 48). The Chinese suspected them of having communicated the results of the divinations to the 14th Dalai Lama before the authorities had been informed. The child chosen by the Dalai Lama is still reported as missing. Rumour has it that his parents have been back in their village since summer 2007. The Chinese refusal of the participation of the Dalai Lama is all the more surprising since his opinion was sought in the selection of the 17th Karmapa, while traditionally the Dalai Lama does not play a part in the selection of the hierarchs of this school. Custom required that the Dalai Lama simply provide a seal of confirmation to the Karmapa after his selection by his disciples.[66]

Tsering Shakya (1999: 444) considers that the recognition of the 11th Panchen Lama by the Dalai Lama when he had been excluded from the search had resulted in a loss of face for the Chinese leaders, who had hoped to take this opportunity to show they held authority over Tibet.

Today Tibet possesses two Panchen Lamas, of whom Dge 'dun chos kyi nyi ma, the one recognised by the Dalai Lama, is considered to be

[65] The lineage of Karmapas was related to the Ming emperors of China (1368–1644).

[66] Usually, the Karmapa leaves a letter in which he gives instructions that will allow his reincarnation to be found. In the case of the 16th Karmapa, who died in 1981, things turned out to be complicated. The Tai Si tu discovered the letter, but some of the Karmapa's close relatives, led by the Zhwa dmar pa, doubted its authenticity. The family then split into two camps, each of which ended up choosing an incarnation. There are now, therefore, two Karmapas. The problem here is the financial issue at stake. The Karmapa recognised in Tibet would not have been able to manage the fortune left by his predecessor, in Sikkim in particular. Today, the followers respect one another according to their relations with the Tai Si tu or the Zhwa dmar pa.

a political prisoner by international public opinion and the other, Rgyal mtshan nor bu, selected by the Chinese, is ignored by the Tibetan people.

The flight of the Karmapa to India in January 2000, the Tibetans' non-recognition of the 11th Panchen Lama chosen by the Chinese (who has now come of age, giving him the power to recognise the Dalai Lama), as well as the advanced age of the 14th Dalai Lama (born in 1935), seem to be factors in the decision to officialise a fait accompli current in China since the end of the 1980s. On 13 July 2007, the office of religious affairs of the People's Republic of China promulgated "Measures for the recognition of Tibetan Buddhist reincarnated masters". Before this law, nothing had been published and no measures aiming at control over the selection of reincarnations had really been formalised.

In reaction to this law, certainly intended to regulate the recognition of the next Dalai Lama, the Tibetan hierarch proposed a new form of selection of his successor. It would first of all be a matter of asking the great Tibetan masters about the future of the institution of the Dalai Lama itself: does it have to be preserved? The Dalai Lama himself raised the possibility that he might very well be the last incumbent if Tibetans considered the institution to be of no further use. If the Tibetan people's response was affirmative, the Dalai Lama specified that he would be reincarnated in India or abroad, but not in China, inasmuch as he would die in India, where his successor will pursue his mission.[67] The other solution he proposed would be to choose his successor before he dies himself (he made clear that this had already been done). In this case, the choice would be democratic (with an election) or else he himself would name the next Dalai Lama.[68] China considers this idea as being contrary to traditional rites and historical precedents and now presents itself as the guarantor and protector of Tibetan traditional culture!

The important question is not the selection of great reincarnations—the Dalai Lama in particular—but rather that of the status we grant or recognise in these reincarnated masters today. The Dalai Lama held temporal and spiritual powers in Tibet. He ran his country. In exile, he gradually democratised his government. By democratically naming a

[67] Yang Mingzhu, "Dalai Lama Says Multiple Ways to Elect the 15th Dalai Lama", *Epoch Times*, Central News Agency, 23 November 2007.

[68] *Sankei Shimbun*, 21 November 2007.

prime minister, he gave up his role of temporal leader of the Tibetans. Today he is no more than a “counsellor” to his government. While the Panchen Lama has never held an official political position in Tibet, his political authority has been recognised by China since the 17th century, because he belonged to the second lineage of reincarnations after that of the Dalai Lamas, within the *Dge lugs* school, and because he was at the head of a vast estate.

The Karmapa is the head of the lineage of the Karma bka’ rgyud pa, a lineage that was very close to the Ming Dynasty, as previously noted. And the fact that the Karmapa was recognised by both the Tibetans and the Chinese could have given him a significant role in the future development of Sino-Tibetan relations. But today, these three masters are above all spiritual figures and none of them holds the slightest political power constitutionally. Their power of influence over the Tibetan community is, however, of considerable importance.

Recently, other reincarnated masters have become closer to the Dalai Lama: Gling Rinpoche, whose previous incarnation was the 14th Dalai Lama’s tutor, and A skya Rinpoche, who left China for the United States at the beginning of 2000. Both belong to the *Dge lugs* school.

Glossary of Chinese Terms

bian chang mo ji 鞭長莫及
jianxuan 揀選
jiang shen zhi fa 降神之法
Jinbenbaping 金奔巴瓶
Jinping cheqian 金瓶掣簽
Jin ping 金瓶
Lama shuo 喇嘛說
Lama zhuanshi banfa 喇嘛轉世辦法
Qin ding zhangcheng ji dachen zouyi 欽定章程幾大臣奏議
Song Yun 松筠
tiaoli 條例
Xizang she zhuzha dachen 西藏設駐劄大臣
Yonghe gong 雍和宮
you genji zhi hubilehan 有根基之呼畢勒罕
zhu Zang dachen 駐藏大臣
zou Zang nei shanhou shi ba shi 奏藏內善後十八事

Bibliography

Archives de la Région autonome du Tibet 1995 *Bod kyi lo rgyus yig tshags gces bdus. Xizang lishi dang'an huicui. A Collection of Historical Archives of Tibet.* Beijing: Wenwu.

Berger, P. 2003. *Empire of Emptiness, Buddhist Art and Political Authority in Qing China*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Boulnois, L. 1983. *Poudre d'or et monnaie d'argent au Tibet*. Paris: CNRS.

Buffetrille, K. 1989. La restauration du monastère de bSam-yas: un exemple de continuité dans la relation de chapelain-donateur au Tibet ? *Journal Asiatique,* 278, 3–4, 363–411.

Chayet, A. 2005. À propos du règlement en 29 articles de l'année 1793. *In* F. Jagou (ed.) *Les Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie,* Conception et circulation des textes tibétains, vol. 15, 125–145.

Chen, Qingying 2005. *The System of the Dalai Lama Reincarnation*. Peking: China Intercontinental Press.

Chen, Qingying and Wang, Xiangyun forthcoming. *The use of the Golden Urn lottery: its Institution and Implementation*.

Chen, Youxin 陳友新 1996. "Qianlong 58 nian qian ding Xizang shanhou zhangcheng chutan" 乾隆58 年前定西藏善後章程初談, *Di er jie Zhongguo bianjiang shixue shuyan taolun wenji* 第二屆中國邊疆史學術研討論文集 , Taipei: Guoli Taiwan shifan daxue lishi xi: 185–214.

Rdo ring Paṇḍita 1987. *Dga' bzhi ba'i Mi rabs kyi Byung ba Brjod pa Zol med gtam gyi rol mo* (= *Rdo ring Paṇḍita'i rnam thar*). Chengdu: Éditions du peuple du Sichuan, 2 vols.

Duojie Caidan (comp.) 多杰才旦 1993. *Yuan yilai Xizang difang yu Zhongyang zhengfu guanxi dang'an shiliao huibian* 元以來西藏地方与中央政府關係檔案史料匯編. Pékin: Zhongguo Zang xue, 7 vols.

Ehrhard, F.-K. 2007. The biography of Sman-bsgom chos-rje Kun-dga' dpal-ldan (1735–1804) as a source for the Sino-Nepalese war. *In* B. Kellner *et al.* (eds) *Pramāṇakīrti. Papers Dedicated to Ernst Steinkellner on the Occasion of his 70th Birthday*. Part1. Wiener Studien zur tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde 70.1, Wien: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien Universität Wien, 115–33.

Goldstein, M. C. 1989. *A History of Modern Tibet 1913–1951: The Demise of the Lamaist State*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Helin 和琳. 1896. *Wei Zang tongzhi* 衛藏通誌.

Huc, R.-E. [1924] 1987. *Souvenirs d'un voyage dans la Tartarie et le Thibet*. Paris: Peuple du Monde.

Jagou, F. 2001. La politique religieuse de la Chine au Tibet. *Revue d'études comparatives est-ouest*, Politique et religion en Asie Orientale, 32 (1), 29–54.

Jagou, F. (谷岚) 2007. Manzhou jiangjun Fu K'anggan : 1792 zhi 1793 nian Xizang zhengwu gaige de xianqu 滿州將軍福康安 : 1792 至 1793 年西藏政務改革的先驅 (Fu K'anggan: A Manchu general at the origin of the Tibetan administrative reform of 1792–1793). *In* P. Calanca and F. Jagou (eds), *Faguo Hanxue* (Sinologie française) 12, Bianchen yu qiangli 邊臣與疆吏 (Border officials), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 147–67.

Jagou, F. 2010. Étude des toponymes choisis par les Mandchous pour définir le territoire tibétain. *In* J.-L. Achard (ed.) *Etudes tibétaines en l'honneur d'Anne Chayet*, Genève, Droz, 127–46.

Liao Zugui 廖祖桂, Li Yongchang 李永昌, Li Pengnian 李鵬年. 2004. Qin ding Zang nei shanhou zhangcheng er shi jiu tiao banben kaolue 欽定藏內善後章程二十九條版本考略, *Zhongguo Zangxue*, 2: 30–43; 3: 69–87; 4: 57–75.

Millward, J. 1998. *Beyond the Pass, Economy, Ethnicity and Empire in Qing Central Asia 1759–1864*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Petech, L. [1950] 1972. *China and Tibet in the Early 18th century. History of the Establishment of Chinese Protectorate in Tibet*. Leiden: Brill.

Petech, L. 1973. *Aristocracy and Government in Tibet, 1728–1959*. Rome: IsMEO.

Qin ding da Qing huidian shili 欽定大清會典事例. 1899. Collection of biographies of the History (Story) of Qing (*Qing shi liezhuan* 清史列轉), *Da chen zhuan ci bian* 大臣轉次編

Rgyal ba sku 'phreng brgyad pa 'jam dpal rgya mtsho'i gsung 'bum (Collected Works of the Eighth Dalai Lama Jampel Gyaltsho), Reproduced from a Lhasa Zhol edition preserved by the library of the Private Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Dharamsala, 2001.

Richardson, H. E. 1974. *Ch'ing dynasty inscriptions at Lhasa*. Rome: Ismeo.

Richardson, H. E. 1998. The fifth Dalai Lama's Decree Appointing Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho as Regent, reproduced in *High Peaks, Pure Earth. Collected Writings on Tibetan History and Culture*. Londres: Serindia, 440–61.

Ruegg, D. S. 1991. *Mchod-yon, yon-mchod* and *mchod-gnas/yon-gnas*: on the historiography and semantics of a Tibetan religio-social and religio-political concept. *In* E. Steinkellner (ed.) *Tibetan History and Language, Studies Dedicated to Uray Géza on his Seventieth Birthday.* Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde, heft 26. Wien: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien Universität Wien, 441–53.

Ruegg, D. S. 1995. *Ordre spirituel et temporel dans la pensée bouddhique de l'Inde et du Tibet*. Paris: Collège de France (Institut de Civilisation indienne, quatre conférences au Collège de France, fasc. 64).

Shakya, T. 1999. *The Dragon in the Land of Snows: A History of Modern Tibet since 1947*. London: Pimlico.

Stupar, N. 1996. Le bouddhisme dans la cité interdite. *In* Réunion des Musées nationaux (ed.), *La Cité interdite, vie publique et privée des empereurs de Chine 1644–1911*. Paris: Paris Musées, 174–77.

Tuttle, G. 2005. *Tibetan Buddhists in the Making of Modern China*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Van der Kuijp, L. 1995. Les Dalai Lamas du Tibet et les origines des lamas réincarnés. *In* M. Brauen (éd.), *Les Dalai Lamas, les 14 réincarnations du bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara*. Lausanne: Favre, 14–31.

Wei Yuan 魏源 (1794–1857), *Shengwu ji* 聖武記, juan 5.

Zhou Runnian 周潤年. 1994. Beijing Yonghe gong yuzhi 'Lama shuo' beiwen kaoshu 北京雍和宮御制 '喇嘛說'碑文考述, *Yonghe gong gai miao 250 zhou nian wenji* 雍和宮改廟 250 周年文集 (*Academic Papers on the 250th Anniversary of the Yonghe gong lamasery*), 10, 29–31.

TRANSFORMED RITUALS?
SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE PARADIGM OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF RITUALS IN THE TIBETAN CONTEXT

THIERRY DODIN
UNIVERSITY OF BONN

Religious rituals have long been the focus of a large body of academic work undertaken in the Himalayas. This is arguably due, on one hand, to the great variety of ritual forms, within both Buddhism and Hinduism, that have developed there, as well as the sheer ethnic diversity of the region. This has led to a great variety of permutations of originally Indian ritual forms, alongside the continuation or development of local rituals. On the other hand, the close interconnectedness between the social, cultural, political and religious spheres that characterises most of these ethnic groups has certainly contributed to making rituals a particularly appealing subject of study.

This brief discussion paper intends to deliver a preliminary reflection on the validity of the paradigm of 'transformation' of religious rituals into political acts in the Tibetan context. This article takes three examples in which religious forms have played a role, or were perceived as playing a role, in public events in which Tibetans expressed political dissent or which otherwise bore political significance: the demonstrations which shook Lhasa in Autumn 1987, the fur-burning events of the first half of 2006 and the mass prayers performed for the long life of the Dalai Lama in early 2007.[1]

[1] Important note: This paper does not in any way intend to enter a theoretical discussion on the definition of the concept of religious ritual. For the purpose of this paper, a ritual is simply a regulated procedure, ranging from a simple gesture to a complex body of acts, like recitations, gestures, choreographies etc., which can last for days, and are known to be performed for religious purposes and understood by the performer as bearing religious significance.

I. Circles of protests (1987)

The demonstrations of autumn 1987 in Lhasa were treated by Ronald D. Schwartz in his book *Circles of Protest: Political Ritual in the Tibetan Uprising*.[2] The work, which was published in 1994, provides a reliable and detailed account of the political unrest of that year. Apart from Schwartz's own observations, it draws on comprehensive first-hand information gathered by Tibetans who set up a monitoring network with the purpose of informing the international community about the political situation in Tibet. As such, *Circles of Protest* certainly provides a unique insight on the incidents and their aftermath, rich in details and anecdotes. It is a valuable document on Tibetan political history that emerged at a time when field research and information gathering in Tibet were still a great challenge. The book gained a certain popularity and it is occasionally still in use for students' seminars. A further factor that contributed to the popularity of the book is arguably the seductive conceptualisation of the protest developed in the first chapter as a 'transformation' of religious ritual forms into a political instrument from which the title is derived.

Political demonstrations will be generally regarded as perfect examples of chaotic events, i.e. of events so complex and driven, in course and outcome, by so many individuals, and combined with circumstantial factors, that they supersede predictions and exhaustive explanation. It is therefore no wonder that Schwartz's handy analysis appears to help us grasp and make sense of the described protests. That it additionally draws its explanatory pattern from religion undoubtedly makes the concept appear even more credible, as it appeals to the familiar association of Tibet and Tibetan culture with religion. Finally, as monks were the most prominent protagonists of the unrest, it seems only natural to assume that the protests drew on religious patterns.

Circles of Protests argues that the demonstrations of autumn 1987 displayed "a pattern of performance" by which Schwartz means "protest became ritualized, assuming the same symbolic form every time it occurred" (*ibid.*: 20). Schwarz sees a ritual-like nature of the protest at three levels.

At the first level, writes Schwartz, the protest provided its participants with an experience of community and allowed for the creation of

---

[2] From here on, the work will be referred to under the short title *Circles of Protest*.

a "'liminal' space" in which solidarity overcomes political powerlessness and nationhood is expressed. This seems to draw on the social dimension of rituals, the *communitas*-aspect. However, the expression of solidarity appears central to any collective protest and is arguably common to any demonstration, in particular those meant to express national or nationalist feelings. Hence, in how far the experience of community and solidarity can be linked in the present case with a hypothetical transformation of religious forms will depend on whether such religious forms can be unequivocally identified in the form taken by the protest.

At the second level, Schwartz argues that the 1987 demonstrations were akin to religious rituals in the sense that "ritual is a way of *solving*[3] problems (…) in the form of drama and symbols" (*ibid.*: 20).[4] If we assumed that the participants of the demonstrations indeed believed that their performance had the power to generate some kind of supernatural force able to exert influence in the material world and force the Chinese state to comply with their political demands, and if we were able to demonstrate the presence of religious forms pertinent to that purpose within the structure of the protest, then there would certainly be some point in assuming that the 1987 protests harnessed religious forms for political purposes. However, to back that point it will be necessary to provide evidence of both, the assumed belief on the side of the participants of the protest and the presence of religious forms in its structure. If such evidence is not provided, then the demonstrations will have to be considered a display of discontent and a platform for demands, simply as most demonstrations are, in Tibet or anywhere else.

Later in his first chapter, Schwartz identifies a third level of his interpretation of the protests as "transformed rituals" when he states: "Tibetans have come to see political protest as religiously-sanctioned action" (*ibid.*: 22). He explains that religion is a discourse in which Tibetans still feel confident in a society entirely under Chinese domination. "Not surprising, then", he adds, "that political protest has come to be framed in religious idioms". "The novelty", he adds, "lies in extending the meaning of familiar cultural symbols and practices into (…)

[3] Emphasis added.

[4] What is exactly meant by "solving" (later in the text, the word "resolving" is also used) is not entirely clear. It could draw on a psychological meaning, i.e. in the sense of 'coming to terms with', or have the more direct sense of eradicating a problem. In the following, we will assume that Schwartz wishes to convey the latter sense.

public opposition to Chinese rule". The demonstration of the accuracy of Schwartz's thesis will hence depend here on whether evidence can be provided that the protest was indeed "framed in religious idioms" and "the meaning of familiar cultural symbols and practices" was extended to express opposition to the regime.

After explaining the assumptions governing his interpretative framework, Schwartz moves on to provide a short account of the three demonstrations held in autumn 1987 which he intends to analyse.

On 27 September 1987, protesters made three circuits of the Barkor (Bar skor) while brandishing the Tibetan flag and shouting "Independence for Tibet" (*Bod rang btsan*). They then moved westward towards the office of the Tibet Autonomous Region government where they were confronted by police who dispersed the crowd.

The following demonstration, on 1 October 1987, proceeded along the lines of the initial scenario. This time however, the protesting monks, who apparently intended to do more circuits around the Barkor, were stopped from doing so during the fourth circumambulation. The crowd then besieged the police station and set it ablaze. The police shot into the crowd, killing several protesters. Two of the dead bodies were carried into the Barkor, while a procession of about hundred carried a third body in front of the government compound.

Then, on 6 October 1987, fifty monks gathered in front of the government compound to protest against the detention of twenty-one of their peers during the first demonstration. From this location, the crowd seemed to move on towards the Barkor/Jokhang (Jo khang), but the move ended for reasons that are unclear and the protesters came back to their starting point, where they were met by the police who began beating them and then made further arrests.

Schwartz argues that, during the first two demonstrations, the monks were able to mobilise the crowd because the form of their protest was building on the familiar *kora* (*skor ba*), or circumambulation, around the Barkor. He adds that with this the transformation of a religious ritual into a political one would have occurred and that the process was made possible because of the religious-symbolic understanding which Tibetans have of the vicinity where the protests, and so the alleged transformation process, took place (*ibid.*: 27ff). Moreover, Schwartz remarks that performing *kora* results in the accumulation of karmic merit for one's own benefit and, following the ubiquitous formula, that of 'all sentient beings'. After its putative 'transformation', however,

kora would become a way of accumulating merit for the Tibetan nation in general.[5] But, no evidence is provided that the protesters performed their protest with the purpose of accumulating merit, instead of simply to express discontent and put demands forward as any other demonstration anywhere else would. Even if we were to postulate that a sort of idealism grounded in Buddhist ethics might motivate the demonstrators to participate in the protest, and that this in return might be perceived as accumulating merit (or blessings for that matter—see footnote 5) for oneself or others, this would provide no evidence for the assumption that the central purpose of the performance is anything other than the articulation of political protest, and that the form it takes is in any way inspired by religious forms. One cannot, for instance, see why a Tibetan atheist would not also demonstrate against the regime on the Barkor in the very same way.

Circles of Protests also assumes that the slogans shouted by the demonstrators are a transformation of the mantras devotees recite while circumambulating the Barkor. But again, although many of the protesters who assembled on the Barkor in autumn 1987 to demonstrate and shout political slogans might well have been the very same people who would normally be seen at the same location reciting prayers, mantras etc., this common feature alone does not provide evidence of a tangible link between slogans and mantras.

Part of Schwartz's analysis seems to be based on the assumption that as the Barkor is a sacred place, most activities undertaken by Tibetans here will have some sort of religious significance. But this reflects a narrowed view of the Barkor as an environment. Although it is indeed a religious site of primary importance, the Barkor also has other roles for Tibetans; for instance, it is a market place. It is thus not unusual to witness Tibetans announcing loudly the price of their goods and mumbling mantras in the same breath, but this does not make commercial activities religious. What compulsion is there then to link the shouting of political slogans to the recitation of mantras?

---

[5] However, for most Tibetans, the benefit of *kora* is at least just as much to receive 'blessings' (Tib. *byin rlabs*). It is believed that sacred places, objects and persons emanate a sort of transcendental positive force (similar to the *mana* known in Polynesian cultures, albeit less neutral), and that this force can be induced onto the devotees while circumambulating them. In practice, however, for Tibetans without further Buddhists erudition, both concepts seem to merge (for a general discussion of these concepts, see for instance Huber 1999: 2–18). In fact, the concept of 'blessings' would better match Schwartz's interpretation of the protest, and his use of the concept of 'merit accumulation' might well result from a confusion of both concepts.

Further developing his reading of the symbolism of the locations of the 1987 protests, Schwartz correctly states that the Barkor and the Jokhang are considered by Tibetans to be religious space and indeed the sacral centre of Tibet, whereas the government compound in front of the Potala is the space of Chinese political power. Still, Tibetan perceptions of both spaces appear in fact broader and far more ambiguous. The Jokhang for instance was also the seat of several offices of the traditional Tibetan government, most of which had no particular religious relevance. While this may lack relevance to many contemporary Tibetans, historic and legendary narratives circling around the location of the modern TAR government compound are more likely to be present in collective memories. The place was traditionally known as *Shutri Lingka* (Bzhugs khri gling ka), the 'Garden (or Park) of the Throne', a name which appears to have been coined when the Mongol Khans, Gushri Khan in the mid-17th century and Lhazang Khan (Lha bzang Khan), in the early 18th century, had established their military camps here.[6] Both had come to Tibet to establish, or re-establish, a Tibetan type of government that united temporal and religious power—that of the Dalai Lamas. These episodes in Tibetan history were re-enacted at the beginning of each year in Lhasa in the form of the Yasor (Ya sor) festival.[7] During this festival, members of the Lhasa nobility wearing ancient military gear (some of Mongol origin and some captured on various military campaigns, like the Dogra expedition of 1841) would set up tents at the foot of the Potala and form a procession across the Tibetan capital aimed at banishing evil from Tibet.[8] Even long before the Mongol expeditions into Tibet, the space in front of the Potala was associated with the banishment of evil forces, at least the northern part of it, since the underground water spirits (*klu*) who were hindering the construction of the Jokhang are believed to have been imprisoned in the Dralha Lupuk cave (Brag lha klu phug) located on the flank of the Chakpori Hill (Lcags po ri).[9] The whole space between the foot of the

6 Map in Schäfer 1950; Thupten Sangey's *Bod kyi dga' ston* (1982: chap. 13). Note that there seems to have been a secondary camp in Drapchi (Gra phyi), behind the Potala, where troops line up and exercise took place (on this see Thupten Sangey 1982, chap. 14).

7 See Karsten (1983) and Richardson (1993: 31–33).

8 See Thupten Sangey (1982), chap. 13 and 14, which gives a detailed description of the traditional performances that took place at the foot of the Potala in Lhasa at the beginning of the year, and discusses their origin.

Potala and the Kyichu (Skyid chu) River must hence be regarded as a place where political and religious power historically converged. It is additionally linked to rituals aimed at banning negative forces. One may argue that it is not mere coincidence that Chinese political power was established physically at a place where both religious and worldly power had been anchored for centuries.

For the purpose of this discussion-oriented article, it is sufficient however to establish that with the religious sphere and the political and temporal one being so deeply entwined in most parts of the Tibetan capital, the clear-cut separation between both, which appears crucial to Schwartz's analysis, is questionable and alternative interpretations of both places might be just as reasonable. Today, as in the past, the Barkor is both a religious place and a market place; it is simply the focal point of Lhasa (nowadays, more exactly, of the Tibetan part of the city), the point where all streams of public life converge. Demonstrations here attract maximum public attention, and hence it is only natural that the monks who planned the protest chose to launch it here in order to be seen and get support. Furthermore, the Buddhist convention that requires people to move clockwise around the Barkor if only possible makes it very unlikely that the protest march would take any other direction. While this makes the demonstration superficially reminiscent of a *kora* performance, there is, on closer examination, no compelling reason to read any further specific religious nature or origin into it. That the protestors then went on to bring their demands to the authorities at the seat of the local government is also logical and needs no further explanation based on religion.

II. Fur burnings (2006)

During the first half of 2006, Tibetans in most parts of Tibet, but particularly outside the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) organised popular events during which the pelts of tigers, leopards, otters and other endangered species were burnt publicly. These events occurred after the Dalai Lama made a dramatic appeal to Tibetans to stop using furs of endangered animals in January 2006 during a Kālacakra initiation performed in Amravati (Maharashtra, India).

---

[9] Dowman (1988: 50). The legend goes more exactly that the *klu* (water-spirits) would have stopped the drainage of the lake on the spot where the Jokhang was to be built.

The use of fur for fashion purposes was in no way an innovation in Tibet but had long roots in traditional popular Tibetan culture. Illustrations in many books from the late 19th and early 20th century, for instance those by Rock (1992: 70, 75, 81) show that in eastern Tibetan regions with nomadic population in particular, the pelts of wild cats were common paraphernalia.[10] The phenomenon had become spectacularly inflated however during the 1990s, as the display of furs became sponsored by the local authorities. With at times grotesque displays of Tibetans wearing over-dimensional jewellery and several layers of animal furs, which had less and less in common with the traditional ceremonial attires of old Tibet, the authorities apparently intended to demonstrate a purported new wealth in rural regions as well as to convey a message that they were showing respect for Tibetan traditions. Competitions of these supposed traditional costumes were organised between counties and resulted in the publication of many VCDs and brochures that were distributed throughout the Tibetan areas and abroad.[11]

The impact of the new 'fashion' in wildlife was acknowledged by NGOs working on environmental issues in Tibet, in particular by the Yushu-based Tibetan NGO 'Snow Land Great Rivers', and campaigns were launched to reverse the trend. These campaigns often drew on Buddhist ethics, or more exactly on the influence of lamas on the general population. A Tibetan environmental activist put it:

> If you tell them [Tibetans in the villages and grasslands] about environmental protection, they are at best not particularly fascinated; but if we get the local lama or any other lama revered by them to go and meet them and preach that the trend is against Buddha's teachings, they will perhaps not understand what Buddha's teachings exactly are on that, and likely won't be particularly interested, but they will get the point that what they are doing is wrong. And that is likely to have an impact.[12]

---

[10] To a certain extent, fur was also in use in Central Tibet, for instance for ceremonial dress (see for instance Thupten Sangey 1982, chap. 13 for a detailed description of the clothes of the officials leading the Yasor festival); for a picture of the same, see Engelhardt (2007: 182). For carpets and seating mats used by dignitaries, see for instance Lhalungpa (1983: 126).

[11] Examples of such depictions can be found for instance in the brochure *Lithang/Litang lha bya khrung khrung dkar pos/ yid du bzhes pa'i gnas mchog* (2004; place of publication unknown) and the VCD *Horse races of the grassland* (Kanding 2005).

[12] Personal communication from a Tibetan environmental activist (name withheld), October 2005.

The impact, however, proved to be limited, as even in the few areas where the campaigns succeeded change remained fragile and temporary and people reverted to wearing wildlife furs after a while.[13] It was only following the spread of the news about the appeal by the Dalai Lama in early January 2006 that the situation changed radically. The first information about Tibetans burning furs was published in late January 2006 and related to Rebkong (Reb gong).[14] Detailed pictorial and other documentation swiftly came into circulation. In particular, a video about the fur burning event in Lithang (Li thang) documented the event from the beginning to the end.[15] These allow for a fairly good general picture of the circumstances and process of the events.

Interestingly, despite displaying a very consistent pattern all across Tibet, the fur burning events of 2006 do not seem to have been centrally planned or organised. The events invariably started with public appeals made by individuals to give up the use of furs. The appeals contained Buddhist ethic stances, i.e. that it would be immoral to kill animals purely for the purposes of vanity, but they also were referential to modern concepts of animal and environmental protection and most importantly of PRC laws and regulations on nature and wildlife protection.[16] That the Dalai Lama upholds these concepts and that he had asked Tibetans to give up furs was not mentioned in the appeals, but word-of-mouth propaganda ensured that everyone was well aware of it.[17] Those who made these appeals mostly set an example by displaying furs in their possession publicly and proclaiming their intention to burn them. The crowd then followed their example, and the fur wardrobes of entire villages—of astronomic value on the Tibetan market—were left hanging on display for days, usually on ropes suspended between poles specially erected for the occasion. Then a date was set for the destruction of the pelts, mostly according to astrological calculations, and on the given day a pyre was erected, ignited and the furs thrown on it, one by one, until all of them were reduced to ashes. With every fur that went up in flames, the crowd would exult, often shouting

[13] See the website of Snow Land Great Rivers (www.snowland-great-rivers.org) which provides information about these campaigns, their process and results.

[14] tibetinfonet.net/content/update/2, dated 31 January 2006.

[15] VCD *The Protection of Wild Animals Begins with Oneself.*

[16] An example of such appeal in original can be found at tibetinfonet.net/content/display_image/1703b3.

[17] Interview with a direct witness of the events, from Lithang, male, in his 40s; compiled in *TIN-doc A-05.05.06*.

formula, like: *Kyi kyi so so lha rgyal lo*,[18] and many would recite prayers and mantras while watching the flames. At the end of these quasi-ceremonies, many people, mostly young men, danced around the fire and jumped across it.

For all we know about them, the fur burning events bore both religious and political connotations, which makes them relevant for our discussion on the purported harnessing of religious forms for political purpose. Buddhist ethical attitudes were cited as motivation by the organisers of the events, but some of them, although they are wildlife- and nature-protection activists, admitted rather frankly that they were fully aware of the political implications of their actions and enthusiastic about it. During a debriefing session, one of them said:

> I consider myself an environmental activist first, but although I do not see much sense in being politically active under the current circumstances, I am also a Tibetan patriot. In fact, one of the motivations for me to be an environmental activist is that in helping preserving Tibetan nature, I also contribute to preserve Tibet and Tibetan culture and so us as a distinctive nationality. I am also a Buddhist, but my knowledge of Buddhism is rather limited, I believe. Now, we had this very happy situation that the Dalai Lama had made this strong statement and that happened to endorse what we always wanted to do, eradicate this decadent attitude towards wildlife which had come up fairly recently. At the same time, by putting his words into practice, we could show him our reverence, thank him that he is still here for us, pay our debt to him and show our thankfulness and everyone could see that, and for doing so we did not even have to transgress Chinese laws, but in fact, just apply them! That was simply a best case scenario, and one that both, religious and non-religious Tibetans, of which there are many among the educated, could be happy with.[19]

Regarding the motivations of the average participants, the same person said:

[18] A formula used in diverse contexts, particularly at the end of a ritual or recitation, or while reaching a mountain pass, often translated as "May the gods be victorious."

[19] *Ibid.*; the informant was, however, also fully aware of the necessity to 'de-politicise' the situation: "After this incredible success, we must take great care! We made a point, it appears, we solved a problem, but we must be wise enough not to overdo it. If we continue dwelling on the role of the Dalai Lama in this development, and dwell too much on why people were so enthusiastic at once about wildlife preservation, then we might lose the benefits for nature preservation. The government have had to accept what happened, but they could react very negatively if we behave insensitively now".

> We who organised the fur burnings are mostly educated people; we went to universities in the Mainland where we came in contact with modern 'green' concepts, but our people who participated in the burnings have not much ideas of these things. I mean, they know about it, from television for instance, but it is not something they can easily integrate in their lives. Most of them are very simple people, you know. But they knew about the Dalai Lama's message, because everyone knew. They heard he said he felt sometimes like dying when he sees Tibetan people wearing tiger or leopard pelts. They were upset. Most of them know even less about Buddhism than I do, but they could understand his disapproval, they felt some kind of guilt and they felt the need to show they understand and support him. They wanted to show that. When the pelts were on fire, very strong feelings were coming up. People shouted mantras and shouts of joy, and at the same time, many of the same persons were in tears.[20]

In order to avoid upsetting the authorities, who might have considered the mass participation of monks in non-religious public events as political demonstrations, monks as a rule did not directly take part in the events, although those often did take place in or in the direct proximity of monasteries. The Lithang video also shows monks distributing *khata* (*kha btags*) to the participants after the event. The decision to burn the furs on a date set by astrological calculation could also be seen as underlining a sacral dimension of the event.[21] Finally, young men jumping across the fire is a common display while effigies are burnt during evil expiation rituals and hence might provide an insight into any quasi-religious understanding of the events.

While all those religious elements again point to the deep connections between the religious and the profane in Tibetan society, as a whole, the fur burning events were completely new creations, drafted by laypeople especially for the occasion and with the double purpose of tackling an ecological (and, given the ruinous consequences of fur as fashion, social) problem and demonstrating loyalty and reverence towards the Dalai Lama. The events were hence political demonstrations in that they served to demonstrate people's opinions and on-going attachment to the Dalai Lama. Set pieces from the large trove of Tibetan religious acts were conspicuous during the events, but they were not central to any of them and there is no reason to make the

[20] *Ibid.*

[21] The fact that Tibetans consult astrologers before any important event, though, clearly weakens this point.

assumption that the events were in any way grafted onto existing religious rituals. Logically then, a transformation of religious ritual into political protest cannot have taken place here either.

III. Prayers for the long life of the Dalai Lama (2007)

One recent episode where religious performance and political statement seem to have almost perfectly overlapped occurred in March 2007. Apparently in parallel with a cycle of prayers for the long life of the Dalai Lama, which was then being organised at his exile seat in Dharamsala (India), large groups of people performed the same prayers in many locations all over the Tibetan regions inside the PRC. In Lhasa, on 14 March, Tibetans in their hundreds assembled for that purpose at the Kuru Zampa (?) Iron Bridge as well as in front of the Jokhang and at the Tengyeling (Bstan rgyas gling) monastery until the crowd was dispersed by police.[22]

Formally, these were purely religious rituals, and it was conspicuous that no political demands or any criticism of China or the rule of the Communist Party were made. Yet, due to the specific context of their performance, i.e. the perception of the person of the Dalai Lama as a political leader by both the Chinese authorities and the performing Tibetans (albeit, clearly from very different perspectives), these religious and superficially non-political rituals had highly political implications. In other words, purely religious and fully traditional—as opposed to 'transformed'—rituals were performed, but, aside from their well perceived and certainly sincere religious meaning, they also intentionally conveyed a political message. Tibetans knowingly played with the ambivalence by making candid remarks like: "We did not say anything against the Chinese, we just prayed for His Holiness".[23] This episode is interesting because it demonstrates that religious rituals do not appear to require any 'transformation' to gain political relevance. Rather, it is purely the context of the performance, the intentions of the performers and others' perceptions of their performance that make the ritual political.

---

[22] Allegiance to the Dalai Lama and those who "become rich by opposing splittism", *tibetinfonet.net/content/update/61*.

[23] *TIN-doc A-21.03.07*.

CONCLUSION

It appears that in none of the three examples mentioned above is there something that could be, with some justification, labelled a transformation or modification of religious forms for political purpose.

Ronald Schwartz's interpretation of the 1987 protests in Lhasa, although initially enticing and appealing, appears less compelling on closer examination as it bases its premise on superficial and coincidental[24] similarities of the protests with religious forms and on a selective interpretation of their locations. On the basis of the ascertained facts, as provided by Schwatz, there is simply no reason to consider the protests of 1987 in Lhasa as being essentially any different to the majority of political demonstrations in any other part of the world or in any way more linked to religious forms than any other social performance in a Tibetan context.

The fur burning events of 2006 were eminently political in that they expressed and demonstrated attachment to the Dalai Lama (and were meant to do so) as well as religious fervour. But although their performance was often accompanied by religious acts, they were not based on any religious forms in the first place and so the question of there being a transformation of religious ritual doesn't arise here.

The mass prayers for the Dalai Lama of March 2007 were definitely set religious rituals and their performance can be ascertained, at least to some extent as having been intentionally political on the basis of collected statements of the participants and the fact that they were aware of risking confrontation with the authorities with their performance. But it is the context of their performance that bestowed on it a political nature. The rituals themselves did not seem to have undergone any transformation.

Almost any religious ritual or act can have political meaning when placed within an observational framework that is itself politicised (and the political practice in Tibetan regions of the PRC seems to just create ideal conditions for a 'politicisation' of most people's daily lives). Conversely, primarily profane or political acts or performances will often have, in a Tibetan socio-cultural context, religious dimensions. They are also likely to be accompanied by stereotypical religious forms,

[24] At least, Schwartz does not provide clear evidence that there was more than a coincidence here.

but that does not make them religious as such. Rather than the paradigm of transformation, that of the intricacy of the relationship between the spheres of the profane (and hence the political too) and that of the religious is probably more appropriate in analysing Tibetan political performance.

All in all, and additionally considering a clear Tibetan reluctance to manipulate religious rituals, it therefore appears doubtful whether the very concept of 'transformation' of religious rituals into political ones is particularly useful in the Tibetan context.

Bibliography

A copy of the announcement for the event (image attached to the article 'Accounts of wildlife skins burning'; tibetinfonet.net/content/display_image/1703b3)

Allegiance to the Dalai Lama and those who "become rich by opposing splittism", tibetinfonet.net/content/update/61

Aris, M. 1992. *Lamas, Princes and Brigands. Joseph Rock's photographs of the Tibetan Borderlands of China.* New York: China House Gallery/China Institute in America.

Dowman, K. 1988. *The Power-Places of Central Tibet: The Pilgrim's Guide.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Engelhardt, I. 2007. *Tibet in 1938–1939: Photographs from the Ernst Schäfer Expedition to Tibet.* Chicago: Serindia.

Kanding 2005. *Horse Races of the Grassland* (VCD).

Huber, T. 1999. *The Cult of Pure Crystal Mountain.* New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Karsten, J. 1983. A note on Ya sor and the secular festivals following the sMon lam chen mo. *In* E. Steinkellner and H. Tauscher (eds) *Contributions on Tibetan Language, History and Culture*, 117–49.

Lhalungpa, Lobsang P. 1983. *Tibet: the Sacred Realm. Philadelphia*: Aperture.

Lithang/Litang lha bya khrung khrung dkar pos/yid du bzhes pa'i gnas mchog, (brochure; place of publication unknown), (2004).

Richardson, H. 1993. *Ceremonies of the Lhasa Year.* London: Serinda Publications.

Sangey, T 1982. *Bod kyi dga' ston*. Dharamsala: LTWA.

Schwartz, R. D. 1994. *Circles of Protest: Political Ritual in the Tibetan Uprising*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Schäfer, E. 1950. *Das Fest der weissen Schleier*. Braunschweig: Vieweg.

snowland-great-rivers.org (website of the NGO Snow Land Great Rivers).

Stein, R. A. 1981. *La civilisation tibétaine*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

The Protection of Wild Animals Begins with Oneself, VCD dated March 2006; artisanal production; no place of publication.

TIN-doc A-05.05.06

TIN-doc A-21.03.07

LEGAL DRAMAS ON THE AMDO GRASSLANDS: ABOLITION, TRANSFORMATION OR SURVIVAL?

Fernanda Pirie
Centre for Socio-Legal Studies
University of Oxford

The nomadic pastoralists of Amdo, on the north-eastern corner of the Tibetan plateau, were notorious for their feuds in the pre-modern period but historical accounts also describe elaborate forms of mediation. In this chapter I analyse the nature of these mediation processes and the extent to which they have been transformed, or not, within the modern era, now that law and order are, officially, the responsibility of the Chinese state.

In a well-known article entitled "Peace and war among the Tibetan nomads", Robert Ekvall, who lived in Amdo throughout the 1930s and 40s, describes the mediation practices of the Tibetan nomads in the following terms:

> Usually mediation of any importance among the nomads took place in… a camp where all parties could set up their best tents and flaunt whatever swank in accoutrements and equipment they could muster… Moreover the members of the mediator delegations carried, and made obvious display of, the best they had in weapons (1964: 1144).

The mediators, as he explains elsewhere, were "persons of standing with reputations for fairness and able to argue like lawyers", and included famous lamas (1968: 78).

> As mediators and contestants went from tent to tent and from campfire to campfire or met in formally ranked circles, the process of mediation was a slow one and the pace leisurely…. There was ample time within which to appeal to high and moral principles and cite the preachments of religion, to go back into history and unearth precedents and settlements which were cogent to the case in dispute, and to cite all the records and traditions of the region on file in tenacious memories….
>
> When tentative assent… had made it seem that agreement was reasonably sure, the mediators could take the risk of calling a general meeting... When all had thus said their say, there came a pause, which might be very long. It was time for the contestants to speak.

> The very real suspense, which pervaded this meeting and reached a pitch at this pause, came from the fact that, until the leaders of the contestant delegations had openly and official said… "yes", nothing was settled. Many mediation efforts were known to have reached…this final stage, only to break down in failure with the saying—*in the negative*—of the last word... (1964: 1145–47).

In this account the mediation process is almost ceremonial, a matter of display, performance and oratorical masterpieces, centred on a prestigious mediator, someone just as keen to show off his status as the parties to the dispute are to show off their wealth. It is a legal drama.

Moving to the twenty-first century, I found another form of legal drama on the Tibetan grasslands in the settlement of a long-running dispute. This one had been captured on disc and was available amongst the music CDs and VCDs on sale in every small town. The VCD, recorded in 2005, portrays the ceremonial settlement of a major pastureland dispute between two Tibetan tribes. The conflict, involving tribes in two different counties, Henan and Machu (Rma chu),[1] on either side of the provincial boundary between Qinghai and Gansu, had raged notoriously, on and off, for decades. The settlement ceremony appears, however, to be a music festival. A large stage has been set up on the Machu grasslands. A banner proclaims, in Chinese, Tibetan and English, that this is *The gathering at the first bend of the Yellow River* (as the pastureland in Machu county is known). A succession of singers and dancers, in both modern and traditional clothes, takes the stage. After about half and hour another banner is unfurled, declaring that this is the ceremony for the signing of a contract of friendship between Machu County, in Gansu Province, and Henan County, in Qinghai Province. The stage is soon crowded with officials and two small tables are set at the front for the leaders of the two counties, each in Tibetan dress. It is clear that they are signing the agreement to end the dispute. *Khatag* (*kha btags*) are exchanged amongst the officials, while it is explained that this is an important moment, the signing of a contract that marks the reestablishment of friendly relations, that everyone is now happy and that there is to be a new start. Among the many letters of congratulation, it is explained, one has been received from Jamyang Zhepa ('Jam dbyangs zhad pa), one of the most important reincarnate

[1] I transcribe most Tibetan words according to the local pronunciation, which varies considerably even within Amdo, and add the Wylie (1959) transliteration in brackets.

lamas in Amdo, from Labrang (Bla brang) monastery. In his letter he congratulates each party on achieving a settlement and urges them to celebrate the restoration of "national peace under communism". Then the music festival continues.

This appears to be a significant transformation of the Tibetan mediation described by Ekvall, the sort of extensive transformation that one would expect, given Amdo's change from a region without centralised political power-holders, to one firmly dominated by the Chinese state. The displays of weaponry and oratory described by Ekvall have been replaced by displays of song and dance, many of them in a modern idiom. Many of the officials are Han Chinese, wearing modern clothes, rather than Tibetans flaunting their 'swank and accoutrements'. The speeches are in Chinese as well as Tibetan. Nevertheless, the ceremony seemingly encapsulates a legal process analogous to the ones described by Ekvall, that is a negotiated settlement achieved by agreement between two previously warring groups and blessed by the words of a high-status lama. The mediated end to a feud between autonomous tribes has been transformed into the mediated end to a feud organised by the Chinese state.

But should this really be regarded as a transformation? Looking in more depth at the mediation processes taking place elsewhere in Amdo, it becomes apparent that this ceremony is not a transformation of anything at all. It is a completely new and invented ritual. At the same time, the mediation of disputes continues elsewhere, in essentially the same form, albeit with some significant changes, as that described by Ekvall.

The following section of this paper is devoted to an analysis of what, I would suggest, is of the essence to these mediation processes. I do this by comparing them with legal rituals analysed by anthropologists elsewhere. This exercise suggests that it may not be right to categorise them as legal rituals at all; although dramatic performances, they incorporate significantly unritualistic elements. Indeed, it is the spontaneous and unconstrained elements that, I suggest, are central. This, in turn, indicates why such processes cannot be, and are not effectively being, brought under the control of government officials and transformed into rituals of the Chinese state.

I. AMDO

Ekvall's description, cited above, is of one of the more elaborate types of mediation process, that which succeeds a blood feud. Such feuds still occur between Tibetan tribes in Amdo and are still associated with these forms of mediation. Conflict resolution also occurs in much less elaborate ways, after thefts and minor fights, or after violence within a small tribal group and in the agricultural areas, where the dynamics of conflict have always been less dramatic. The focus in this paper, however, is on the blood feud between pastoralist groups.[2]

The area known as Amdo is the north-eastern part of the Tibetan plateau and was never incorporated into the Lhasa-based political regime of the Dalai Lamas. The majority of the area is grassland, occupied by nomadic pastoralists who have historically traded their animals with the farmers of the valleys along the northern and eastern edges of the plateau. Although economic developments have allowed many Amdowas to obtain education and jobs within the new towns that have been established on the grasslands, most of the Tibetan population of these areas still depends on livestock for both subsistence and income.

By the early 18th century, when the Qing dynasty overcame the Mongols in Amdo, a number of powerful local rulers had emerged. Monasteries such as Labrang, Rongwo (Rong bo) and Taktsang Lhamo (Stag tshang lha mo) appointed headmen, *gowa* (*'go ba*), to the tribes—groups of several thousand—within their areas.[3] In other areas, such as Sokwo (Sog bo, the Tibetan name for what is now Henan County), Ngawa (Rnga ba) and Chöni (Co ne), secular leaders achieved the status of kings, similarly presiding over groups of tribes (Ekvall 1939; Carrasco 1959), while certain tribes had their own hereditary *gowa* (Hermanns 1949). In Golok, furthest from the Qing administrative centre in Xining, several tribes formed a powerful confederacy under hereditary ruling families. These leaders were known as *xhombo* (*dpon po*) or *achung* (*a skyong*), depending on the area. The Golok nomads

[2] The contemporary ethnographic details in this paper are based on eleven months of fieldwork I conducted in Amdo between 2003 and 2007, which encompassed the pastoral areas in Machu and Henan counties, those in Golok Prefecture and the farming areas in Hualong, Xunhua and Tongren counties.

[3] I use the term 'tribe', following Khoury and Kostiner (1990) to refer to these groups, which have a distinct identity, relatively egalitarian internal relations and leaders who are more like chiefs than heads of a state.

were notoriously independent of centralised control and numerous accounts tell of their pride, their war-like qualities and the threats they posed to travellers and neighbouring tribes alike (e.g. Rock 1956). Ekvall describes the overall pattern as one of alliances, warfare, feuding and overlapping spheres of political, military and religious influence (1939, 1964, 1968, 1981).

These historical accounts indicate considerable instability in the area, with stronger groups preying on weaker and patterns of raids and thefts (Levine 1995: 70). Nevertheless, Ekvall (1964, 1968) also describes well-established practices for the mediation of conflict between tribal groups. Once a death had been inflicted, in response to a raid for example, retaliatory killing could only be avoided by the payment of appropriate compensation or blood money. Large feuds were mediated by high status individuals, whose power was based on their positions as chiefs, their skills of oratory or, in the ultimate case, their charismatic authority as reincarnate lamas (Ekvall 1968: 78–79).

As indicated by the account cited above, these processes took the form of large meetings, generally on the grasslands, each of the opposed groups setting up its own tents, with mediators going to and fro between them. The accounts make clear, however, that the power of the mediators, even when these were high status lamas, was persuasive rather than coercive and that they were by no means invariably successful. There was tension up to the final minute, when assent was given. Until that time it was possible for a stubborn protagonist to reject the whole process.

1. Change

Following the Chinese occupation in 1958, the date on which, the Tibetans say, the Chinese 'came' to the region,[4] the power of the monasteries was destroyed, local leaders were deposed and pastoral activities were collectivised. Under the subsequent reforms of the early 1980s the monasteries were allowed to re-open, albeit under direct control of the state, and livestock was returned to the private ownership of nomad tents. Chinese rule has introduced considerable change and material benefits in the form of roads, markets, schools and healthcare,

[4] This refers to the time when the Tibetan population began to experience the full-scale suppression of their rebellions against Chinese presence and the onset of early reforms.

but the nomads insist that their social organisation, including their tribal affiliation, is substantially the same as it was previously. Now, as before, they describe themselves as being divided into tribal groups, *dewa* (*sde ba*), consisting of several thousand people.[5] The dewa are, themselves, divided into encampments which might consist of forty tents, around two hundred people. Organisation varies throughout the region, but most groups have leaders selected by their members, who may or may not be the same as those officially appointed to represent their groups to the local government. In Machu, for example, each encampment has its own *gowa* and a council of these now takes charge of the affairs of the *dewa*, in the place of the leaders formerly appointed by the monasteries or from hereditary families. Only two or three of these are recognised as members of the local government.

The major part of Amdo now falls within Qinghai and Gansu Provinces. These are divided into Prefectures (Ch. *di qu*), Counties (Ch. *xian*) and Townships (Ch. *xiang*). In some counties, like Machu, the townships have been substantially mapped onto the former *dewa*, although the largest has been divided and the smallest two combined. In other areas, such as Golok, the new administrative divisions tend to cut across former *dewa* boundaries. Nevertheless, each family retains its tribal identity, including those who have now moved to the towns, and this becomes crucial in the event of conflict.

The nomads talk frequently and readily about both actual and potential violence and most men prominently carry knives. They talk as if their neighbours are always just about to attack or steal from them and everyone could tell me stories of fighting and killings that had occurred within their families or encampments within the last few years. They explained that they 'have' to take revenge in the event of a theft of livestock and if a member of their family has been killed they must retaliate against a member of the murderer's family or *dewa*. The nomads strongly disapprove of serious fights among encampment members, but when two encampments are involved, the members of each must combine against the other. When the fight occurs within one *dewa* resolution procedures are normally quickly instigated and relatively informal.

[5] *Dewa* is the general Tibetan term for a group. These tribes can also be known as *shokwa* (*phyogs ba*) and *tsowa* (*tsho ba*), depending on the area. Rather than having a lineage ideology, they are united on the basis of territory, combining to worship local deities (Pirie 2005: 12).

The *gowa* from other encampments, relations from neighbouring *dewa* and monks from the local monasteries generally assist in the mediation process and apply pressure on the parties to agree to a settlement. This echoes Ekvall's (1968: 76–79) accounts from the earlier period, of a "community consensus" in favour of agreement and the informal way in which two or three respected neighbours could "get together with little fuss and go about the business of mediating". Compensation will be ordered in the event of a theft, injury or killing and consensus as to the right amount is normally reached fairly quickly. In the event of a killing *mnyö rtong* (*mi stong*), blood money, will have to be paid and the killer's family may be expelled from its encampment for a few years. The fact that the killer may have been caught and imprisoned by the authorities is irrelevant.

In the event of conflict between persons or groups from different *dewa*, however, violence is more difficult to resolve. Outsiders, such as monks, invariably intervene to try to establish a truce so that mediators, *zowa* (*gzu ba*), can negotiate a settlement. These are likely to be the *gowa* from neighbouring *dewa* or senior monks from the local monastery. A meeting is ultimately set up in a neutral place, now often the local town, with different groups in different rooms and the mediators acting as go-betweens. Their task, they explained to me, is to determine the appropriate level and nature of compensation, the *mnyö rtong*, after the deaths of each side have been reckoned and set off against each other. The amount also depends on the identity of the victims and the nature of the killings. The mediators may also suggest apologies and offerings of religious books.

One fight, for example, had occurred during the past decade between two men from different *dewa* in Machu. One was killed and men from his *dewa* came immediately to take revenge. They entered the encampment of the killer and, not finding him there, they killed a member of his family and a guest. Outsiders then intervened to call a truce and a mediation process was instigated. Since two men had been killed on one side and one on the other, the appropriate compensation would be the value of one life. The *dewa* in question would not accept the normal amount, however, because, they argued, of the manner of the killing: the fact that the aggressors had come right into their encampment. Eventually a senior lama intervened and managed to settle the case by ordering a small, but symbolic, extra payment as a form of apology. This case, and the course which the mediation process took, is typical

of the accounts I heard in pastoral areas throughout Amdo. The predominant cause of conflict is pasture boundaries or livestock straying into another's grasslands, although raids, thefts and drunken fights are also frequently mentioned.[6]

In Machu, Henan and Tongren counties, areas formerly under the control of, or closely linked to, one of the monasteries, people talked of the lamas as the most revered and effective mediators. These are the men who can persuade reluctant nomads to accept a compromise. They can speak well and do justice. In Golok it is the *xhombo* and *achung*, the leaders of the former hereditary ruling families, who are, by contrast, the most effective mediators, although the parties sometimes resort to lamas in the most intractable cases.[7] It is here, too, that they most emphasise the skill and oratory of both *zowa* and *zabshad* (*gzu bshad*). The *zowa* are the mediators, while those selected as representatives of their own parties are known as *zabshad*. Both are expected to display prowess in oratory and skill in the use of *damxhwe* (*gtam dpe*). These are the sayings, rather like proverbs, for which the Golok region is famous.[8] Many concern matters of social conduct and morality, including the importance of cooperation, good relations with the *xhombo*, differences between men and women, the need to resolve small problems, the dangers of anger and bad words, and so on. They often use abbreviated and obscure language. Others have particular significance for the mediation process.

Examples are:

khyams pa rta rdang nang nas bsad kyang mi sha dgos

---

[6] In the agricultural areas major conflicts tend to occur between villagers and neighbouring nomads, again over pastureland, although recently the discovery of the valuable caterpillar fungus, which is dug from the pastures, has caused many groups to come into conflict over the rights to land that had formerly been considered unimportant.

[7] One of these was a very long-running dispute between tribes in the Jigdril (Gcig sgril) area of eastern Golok. Eventually, Gongtang Rinpoche (Gung thang rin po che), from Labrang, intervened and settled the conflict. The sister of his previous incarnation had married into one of the Jigdril ruling families and links between the two had remained close, although most Golokwa owe allegiance to one of the Nyingma monasteries in the region.

[8] I was shown a copy of a recent book in which dozens of examples had been recorded and also found a VCD of a performance in which humorous sketches were enacted, along with a display of *damxhwe* (Pirie 2009).

> If you kill a vagrant among [implicitly, trying to steal] the horses tied up [in your encampment], you still have to pay compensation.

They often take the form of matched couplets:

> *gyod mkhas pas bshad na gzhug gtsang*
> *gri rno pos brus na shal yag*
> A clever speaker can resolve a problem cleanly
> A sharp knife cuts well.

One *achung* told me that he uses the following to persuade parties to compromise:

> *gyod kyi sems kha gar gyi dka'*
> *mar gyi sgam kha gar gyi dka'*
> You never get what you want during a dispute
> A butter box is never full.

In the case of a serious dispute a negotiating committee of six *zabshad* might be set up, consisting of three representatives appointed by each side. Once they have reached a consensus about the right solution it is their task to persuade their own parties to accept their proposals. In such cases the *zowa* enters the proceedings at a relatively late stage, in order to add his oratorical weight and authority to the process and ensure that both parties ultimately assent to the proposed solution.

In many ways, therefore, the modern processes follow the logic of those described by Ekvall. They promote agreement as a matter of negotiation between the parties, rather than in the form of an imposed solution. This is reflected in the structure of the process and the importance of the oratory, which is used to persuade the parties to reach agreement. The *zowa*, as in Ekvall's account, have a special position as men with established status, either as lamas or hereditary leaders, but they still have to persuade the parties to accept an agreement.

II. Mediation as ritual

For long associated with religious, or quasi-religious activities, the term 'ritual' has more recently been extended to the analysis of so-called 'secular ritual'. Moore and Myerhoff (1977: 3–10) and Bell (1997: 138–69), for example, emphasise the ceremonial aspects of secular rituals, the elements of formality and invariant, rule-governed behaviour, as well as the drama and symbolism. Humphrey and

Laidlaw (1994), in the most extreme account of its kind, argue that even meaning and symbolism, although often important elements of certain rituals, are not of the essence of 'ritualised actions'. Rather, what makes actions ritualistic is their formality and prescribed, rule-bound nature. This is what makes an activity, whether sacred or secular, a ritual, rather than simply a drama or a ceremony.

Turning to the mediation processes in Amdo, one finds drama in Ekvall's accounts, particularly in the ostentatious displays of wealth and strength. Those may have become more muted in the current period, but high status mediators still attract displays of deference, offerings of *khatag* and presents. There is still an emphasis on oratory and the use of *damxhwe*, according to the accounts I heard, was a matter of performance—clever, skilful and inventive. These processes are certainly social dramas. They could hardly be characterised as formal, invariant or rule-bound, however. Rather, they seem to encourage individual skill and innovation. I heard several examples of new *damxhwe* that had just been invented. Reflecting the modern situation, one mediator told me he has to remind parties that they must pay proper compensation to an injured party, even if they have already been punished under the state's legal system:

> *myi gcig gi steng la khrims gnyis*
> *rta gcig gi steng la sga gnyis*
> One man subject to two laws
> Is like a horse with two saddles.

In other words, being subject to Chinese law is unsatisfactory, but Tibetan customs (*khrims*), still have to be followed. A good mediator will be able to invent or adapt new *damxhwe* in this manner.

Moreover, as I have discussed elsewhere (Pirie 2007), the mediation processes are characterised by resistance and defiance on the part of the individuals involved. This makes them unpredictable and tense, in the manner Ekvall also describes. Male nomads have to be persuaded, cajoled or forced to exercise restraint and to consent to conciliation and angry individuals are expected to resist attempts to mediate. Even the highest lamas can, at times, be defied. The long-running dispute between the tribes in Machu and Henan, for example, which gave rise to the mediation process mentioned above, had attracted the attention of two high-ranking lamas in the 1990s, one of whom was Jamyang Zhepa, the most senior lama from Labrang monastery and one of the

most respected mediators in Amdo. According to my Machu informants, one *gowa* from Sokwo refused to withdraw from the land and had gone so far as to threaten to shoot the lamas if they tried to intervene again. Another round of bloody fighting followed the failure of the lamas' intervention. Ekvall (1964: 1147) vividly describes the contemptuous rejection of a settlement in its final stages by one, stubborn protagonist and the grudging admiration this behaviour attracted from the onlookers. These mediation processes were, and still are, characterised by individualism and unpredictability, more than by regularity and prescribed formality. To adopt the terminology of Humphrey and Laidlaw (1994: 8–10), they are weakly-ritualised "performances" of a "quasi-theatrical" kind. So on what basis might they be regarded as rituals?

1. Common values

Anthropologists writing on secular rituals have often suggested that they present unquestionable doctrines and dramatise social and moral imperatives (Moore and Myerhoff 1977: 3).[9] Legal ritual, in particular, can "cloak the fundamental disharmonies of social structure by affirming major loyalties to be beyond question" (Gluckman 1965: 265). In Turner's account of Ndembu rituals, for example, he suggests that they tacitly recognize the instability of village communities and relations between them, but posit the ultimate unity of a group of people in a single moral community (Turner 1957: 288–317).

Turning to Amdo, one can see that the mediation process, despite its displays of defiance on the part of individual nomads, is based on shared norms. This is evident from the ability of outsiders to intervene and call a truce. This can only happen because there is a shared understanding of what such an event means and implies, as well as a residual respect between different Tibetan groups. Similarly, agreement can only be achieved because there are common expectations about the levels of compensation appropriate to different types of case. There are no law-like rules and each settlement is a matter of negotiation, based on its particular circumstances, but it reflects a common understanding of what is appropriate.

---

[9] Humphrey and Laidlaw (1994) insist that the communication of meanings is not distinctive or definitional of ritual. These are, nevertheless, aspects commonly found among what might be called legal rituals.

On the other hand, the mediation process is hardly a demonstration of common values. Ekvall (1964: 1144) describes how the meetings could be either at a monastery or on the grasslands. In the former case, the associations of religious power, he says, "tended to increase the pressure of the religious bias towards peace". However, the nomads preferred the grasslands, where their horses were on hand and they could break up the meeting and ride off at a moment's notice. In other words, it was thought to be important that the parties should not be constrained by the proceedings and should retain their independence and autonomy.

The mediation processes do not symbolically affirm an overarching social order, let alone a religious or cosmological order. Despite the importance of the lamas, the place of religion within them is very limited. If there is a dispute of fact the individuals in question may be asked to go to the monastery to swear oaths. Anyone who refuses to do so is deemed to be lying. One *achung* in Golok also told me that he encouraged parties to go to the local monastery to swear an oath of friendship after a settlement. At the conclusion of a major conflict in Jigdril a new *labtse* (*la btsas*), a shrine to the local deity, was established, known as the *tendrel* (*rten 'brel*) *labtse*, the shrine for good relations. However, these are subsequent events, decided upon to suit the particular circumstances of the case. They are not an essential part of the mediation process. There are no ceremonies of reconciliation, religious or otherwise and there is no symbolic restoration of order. After a meeting people just get up and leave, one informant explained. They might go to the monastery to demonstrate their honesty and good faith, but this is not a symbolic affirmation of unity.

The form of the proceedings, the movement of the mediators between the different parties and the precariousness and uncertainty of the process affirm, rather, the autonomy of the different groups who have come into conflict. The way a conflict is perceived, as a problem between groups rather than between individuals, and the anticipated trajectory of the consequent conflict, that which has to be prevented, affirm the tribal loyalties of those involved. The mediation process is predicated on these loyalties, but it is not a symbolic or ritualistic display of common values. Gellner (1988: 146), describing feuding relations in the Middle East, suggests that the forms of conflict that arise between tribal groups depend on group loyalties which, themselves, require clearly defined and visible social ties. However, the image of

orderly tribal relations is not appropriate for Amdo. Individuals can, and always did, move between *dewa*. The situation is more analogous to that described by Dresch (2006) who, analysing tribal law in the Yemen, emphasises the insecurity of the tribes people, the arbitrariness of endemic violence and the procrastination, avoidance and 'exceptions to the rule', which made patterns of dispute 'untidy'.

2. Legal power and authority

Also considering the functions of ritual, Moore and Myerhoff (1977: 4) emphasise that it can lend legitimacy and authority to the positions of particular persons, structuring and presenting particular interpretations of social reality. Central authorities very widely seek to represent their claims to power in terms of law (Roberts 2005: 15). As Just (2007) also points out, the ritualistic aspects of legal processes are likely to increase with social complexity. It is in the more large-scale and complex societies that civil order is more of an achievement. He contrasts, for example, the model courthouse, rules of behaviour and judicial robes of the US courts with the informality of the mediation practices found among the small-scale communities of the Dou Donggo in Indonesia, where shared values and a cosmological order are taken for granted. We should not, therefore, be surprised if legal processes are much less ritualistic in an acephalous society, as Amdo was before 1958. In former times mediators restored relations between warring tribes, rather than symbolising and enacting the authority of a centralised ruler. The contemporary mediation processes follow the same logic.

To some extent, the Amdo processes affirm the status of the mediators, the lamas, *xhombo* and *achung*, those who used prominently to display their weapons and are still renowned for their skill and oratory. These individuals enjoy the highest political and religious authority in the area outside the structures of the Chinese state, and this status attracts small markers of respect. But while such mediators can rely upon their ascribed status, they still have to achieve a result, something which was constantly emphasised to me during fieldwork. Only certain lamas and *xhombo* succeed in doing so, thereby establishing or enhancing their reputations. As I have argued elsewhere (Pirie 2008), the lamas' power to mediate conflict by overcoming the resistance and defiance of angry warring nomads, can be linked with their power to overcome the rebellious and unruly thoughts of their disciples and to

tame the pernicious spirits found throughout the region. In all cases they are undertaking a process of subjugation, for which their reincarnate status uniquely qualifies them. The *xhombo* and *achung* are, to some extent, relying on the ascribed status of their hereditary positions. However, successful mediation is still an achievement, dependent on individual skill. They can also fail and lose status. As Ekvall describes, "mediators had to stand high in the social and power scale", but:

> Rulers, or chiefs of other tribes who assumed the role, did so ... because their positions endowed them with prestige, not because it was expected that they might inject their authority into the role in any attempted power play. The actualities of power and authority being what they are, pressure—stemming from ruler authority—did, nevertheless, operate in some degree, but there was strong and vigilant prejudice against too obvious use of coercion in the mediation process (1964: 1140–41).

The mediation process is not, and was not, simply an affirmation of established status or a means of legitimising the power of office. Rather, it is an arena for the demonstration of skill. The mediator is expected to be tested by the defiant individual who asserts his resistance towards those who promote conciliation. The mediator has persuasive power at his disposal, but little more than that.

3. Order and anti-order

If the mediation process does not serve to legitimise the activities of a law-maker or political authority, might it still work, in more subtle ways, to promote a sense of order? Clifford Geertz (1983: 230–31) suggests that law, specifically "conceptions of fact and law", evoke and symbolise an image of society as it is meant to be. They create the sense that truth, vice, falsehood and virtue are real, distinguishable and appropriately aligned. Or, as Moore and Myerhoff (1977: 16) suggest, rituals construct culture in the face of chaos, being a "declaration against indeterminacy". In an important sense, I would suggest, the mediation process in Amdo is doing just that. However, this is not by symbolising and affirming order and unity, whether in the form of shared moral values or the order imposed or guaranteed by a higher authority. As Dresch (2006: 301) suggests, the importance of legal procedures among tribes in the Yemen is that they represent the world as being governed morally by rules, suggesting that life can or should make sense. It would, however, be a mistake to seek regularity and pre-

dictability within these relations. Those within the system do not expect or seek regularity because they do not think in terms of a body politic (*ibid.*: 296–97). The settlement of disputes, rather, represents men opposed to men and tribes to tribes, as equals. It does not posit a sacred whole, an overarching cosmology or a higher legal order. The Tibetan mediation, similarly, highlights and affirms the oppositional relations between groups and individuals, as equals. It does this by affirming the possibility of autonomy and defiance, rather than shared values within a moral whole. It separates, rather than subordinates those at odds (*ibid.*: 305).

Mediation, therefore, has the immediate purpose of re-establishing peaceful relations between groups and terminating relations based on revenge, which are a bar to cooperation, intermarriage, and so on. However, the process itself is marked by symbols of defiance, individuality and opposition. Individuals display a reluctance to accept a solution and the *zabshad* put on displays of oratory. The two camps are opposed until the final acceptance of the settlement and, as Ekvall describes, the tension increases towards the final moment, when agreement is indicated or denied. The process of mediation serves to impose meaning on these disorderly relations, but not to impose the order of some higher authority.

In his work on the Dou Donggo of Indonesia, Just emphasises the low-key and unritualistic nature of their mediation. He also describes the way in which, in one case, a breach of moral values by a daughter (who had eloped) was followed by a symbolic display of ruptured relations on the part of her mother. This seems to have been a prelude to the eventual settlement of the affair. It served to symbolise and make plain the state of ruptured relations. As Just puts it, it was a form of "anti-order". It was not a form of chaos or indeterminacy, in Moore and Myerhoff's terms, but, rather, a way of giving meaning to the daughter's disorderly act, making it comprehensible and, hence, resolvable. The mediation process in Amdo, I would suggest, does something analogous. It demonstrates and gives meaning to the division between tribes, to the opposition that has arisen between them and the potential for further revenge. The payment of compensation demonstrates their equivalence as social entities. It also demonstrates the lack of authority enjoyed by any leaders over the defiant individuals present and the precarious nature of the good relations that might be re-established during the settlement. The Amdowas are restoring order, but with an affir-

mation of anti-order, of equality and autonomy.

These processes, I would suggest, are legal dramas rather than legal rituals, both in form and in function. They are not ritualistic in the sense of conforming to set patterns and prescribed formulae; rather they encourage defiance and refusal, charisma, skill and individual performance. Nor do they perform the function of the legal rituals analysed by Gluckman and others, symbolising the restoration of peace and order through the affirmation of shared moral values, or the peace achieved by a leader or the representatives of a body politic. Rather, peace is the result of a just settlement, and one accepted as being just, between two morally equivalent parties. It is one brokered by a skilful mediator, not achieved by the subordination of the parties to the higher authority of any political or moral entity.

III. Abolition or transformation

During China's reform period there has been considerable development of the legal system. New laws and rules of procedure have been promulgated, while a new court structure has been established, with different levels of tribunal corresponding to the different levels of government, at County, Prefecture, Province and State levels, staffed by newly-trained judges. In the agricultural and minority areas, where conflict is more likely to concern family relations, boundaries and violence, however, order is still largely maintained through the direct intervention of government officials. These include the police, of course, but also officials responsible for agricultural, pastoral and property matters, birth control and so on. In Amdo, the boundaries between the administrative, policy and judicial functions of the state and its representatives remain blurred. The police still have considerable power to interrogate and punish suspects and property is regarded as being under the control of the state.

The official line is, therefore, that the Tibetan areas are controlled by the Chinese state and subject to its legal system: there is only one law in China and that is Chinese law.[10] The problem of order, as it is regard-

[10] In theory principles of autonomy apply in these minority areas, the PRC Constitution articulates norms of equality, unity, autonomy and development in minority affairs and the Minority Autonomous Law asserts the autonomy of these areas. However, as Potter (2005) describes, these principles are hardly reflected in the reality.

ed by the state's representatives, is that of ensuring that all citizens and communities within China conform to the ideals of citizenship, which are enshrined in Party policy and law. This is particularly important in the minority areas, where traces of old 'feudal' structures are perceived to linger. In practice, however, when conflict escalates among pastoralists, in areas such as Amdo, government officials simply cannot control it. Imprisonment or execution, the sanctions provided by the criminal justice system, are neither a deterrence nor a solution. Whether or not 'perpetrators' are made subject to the state's criminal justice process, once conflict has set up relations of revenge between two groups the only way it can be settled is through what the Tibetans regard as a proper mediation process, with the payment of compensation and agreement between the parties' representatives. For officials in the offices of the County, and even Prefecture, governments the only effective solution is to call in a Tibetan mediator. I constantly heard about mediation processes that had been sanctioned by the authorities and set up in the towns. Lines of communication seem to be well established between these offices and the highest lamas, such as Jamyang Zhepa, and the most renowned of the *zowa* in Golok.

In Xunhua county in Qinghai, for example, a pastureland dispute had arisen between a nomad group and their neighbours across the border in the Ganja region of Xiahe county, in Gansu. The dispute began, as so often happens, when one group let its animals cross into the neighbour's pastures. In the ensuing encounter one man was killed and a revenge attack lead to a death on the other side. The county leaders, with the sanction of the provincial government, asked Jamyang Zhepa to get involved. They also organised a group of *zabshad*, with mediators nominated by each side, men who were "honest and respected with high reputations", according to my informant, one of the township officials from Xunhua. Representatives from each party were invited to gather in hotels in Lanzhou, the capital of Gansu, where they stayed for over a month, while the *zabshad* negotiated between them. Eventually they formulated a settlement acceptable to each side, involving the payment of *mnyö rtong* and compensation for medical fees and livestock lost or stolen. Having secured agreement from all concerned the *zabshad* took the agreement to Jamyang Zhepa for his approval and signature. He was, thus, acting as *zowa*. The final agreement was read out at a meeting attended by both sides. Throughout this process, my informant explained, representatives of the county and township governments

had been present, but they acted as servants to the *zabshad*, organising their food, accommodation and so on. We, thus, have a remarkable account of a mediation process taking place in a modern urban setting, facilitated by government officials, acting as servants to the *zowa* and *zabshad*.

Appeals to the Tibetan *zowa* do, however, raise the ideological issue of authority and control. Government officials are concerned about competing sources of authority and these concerns increase at higher levels, where issues tend to be regarded more in terms of policy and ideology. The different interests, ideologies and power structures within the web of government and state bureaucracy in China are complex. Nevertheless, it is apparent that different priorities predominate at different levels: in the County and Township offices it is of primary importance to ensure that peace is maintained, while at higher levels there is more of a concern with the ideology of state control.

The most local level officials are, thus, caught between competing imperatives. Their dilemmas were neatly illustrated by a succession of incidents that occurred in Darlag (Dar lag), one of the counties in Golok. On my first visit in 2004 I talked to several *xhombo* and others who had been closely involved in mediation processes. It transpired that many were set up by government officials, who provided the premises and invited the *xhombo* to intervene in the dispute. Even the police are afraid, my informants explained, of the nomads' weapons and capacity for violence. On my next visit in 2006 I discovered that there had been a bloody fight earlier in the year between two families from different tribes. Several people had been killed. Before they could call in the *xhombo*, however, the events had been reported to the government in Xining, the provincial capital, whose representatives forbade the local officials to resort to the Tibetan leaders. Rather, they said, the police should arrest the offenders and deal with them according to the criminal justice system. They should then embark upon a campaign to educate people about the law. The men in question had run away, however, and according to my informants imprisonment would not, in any event, resolve the problem. Further violence was almost inevitable. When I returned in 2007, I discovered that the conflict had recently, and quietly, been mediated by one of the *xhombo*, however. "Of course", said my Tibetan informants, "it had to be resolved like this, otherwise there would just have been more fighting".

There are, therefore, ongoing attempts to abolish the Tibetans' prac-

tices of mediation. In practice, however, given the imperatives of maintaining order, this is simply not possible. The Tibetan pastoralists refuse to accept the state's legal procedures as a solution to their conflicts. As different informants repeatedly emphasised, including those who had occupied positions in government themselves, the officials simply cannot solve these problems; they 'have' to call in one of the Tibetans' mediators, a lama, *xhombo* or *achung*.

If such a process is not set up in the right way, however, it can fail, with disastrous consequences. The most dramatic example is the Machu-Henan conflict, referred to earlier, which involved a long-running dispute between Ngulra (Dngul rwa) a large tribe in Machu, and Arig (A rig), a tribe in Henan.[11] My Sokwo informants (from Henan County) told me that they had formerly owned a far more extensive area of land, including most of that now in Ngulra.[12] There had been fighting before 1958, in which forty-four people had been killed. The dispute had been suppressed during the collective period and the Provincial boundary had been settled between the two counties. However, during the reform period Ngulra had complained that a large area of land occupied by two Arig encampments had historically belonged to them. When the Arig nomads refused to move, they launched an attack and killed four of them. Jamyang Zhepa and Gongtang Rinpoche, the two most renowned lama mediators in Amdo, had intervened, investigated and declared that of three hundred thirty thousand *mu* (around two hundred twenty square km) around two-thirds should belong to Ngulra and one third to Arig. While Ngulra would have accepted this compromise, Arig refused and, in an astute move, petitioned the state government in Beijing, arguing that such an impor-

[11] I obtained details from both sides, though I had far more extensive conversations in Ngulra. One of my best informants was one of the *zabshad*, from a different *dewa*. Although he was nominated by Ngulra I have no reason to doubt the veracity of his account. Some informants, more closely involved, were clearly selective and partial in their accounts, but the accuracy of most of the factual details matters less than the overall course the events took, which is not disputed, and the attitudes expressed on each side. An account based on interviews with Sokwo informants is given by Shinjilt (2007).

[12] They were referring to the historical power of the Mongols in the area. The Sokwo people are descendants of the Mongol settlers and the current government has chosen to promote this identity—the town is full of signs in Mongol script, which no-one can read. However, to all intents and purposes the Sokwo people are Tibetan and their former king had close links with Labrang.

tant matter should not be left to the decision of Tibetan lamas, who represented an outdated regime. Beijing, unsurprisingly, was sympathetic and sent representatives to trace out and confirm the established boundary line, which placed 90% of the land in Henan. They refused to hear any arguments about the boundary line, declaring that all property belonged to the state. Inevitably, further fighting ensued and a further twenty-nine people were killed.

Eventually, in the early 2000s, the state government directed the provincial and county governments to resolve the matter, while stipulating, again, that the boundary line was not negotiable. Local officials set up a mediation committee, with three *zabshad* appointed by each side. This committee spent around four months consulting with the monks from the monasteries in each area, as well as the *gowa* of each tribe, in order to establish the number of deaths and the levels of injury and loss of property on each side. They then negotiated an appropriate compensation payment. This was approved by Jamyang Zhepa and accepted by each side. It was this process that culminated in the ceremony described earlier and recorded on VCD. Ngulra, however, still refused to accept the boundary line, on the basis that it was not the one approved by the lamas.

IV. Transformation or invention?

In the agricultural areas of Amdo, to generalise considerably, the Tibetan populations have been more readily incorporated into the state's structures of control, than in the pastoral areas. The villages in Tongren (Tib. Reb gong), Xunhua (Tib. Rdo sbis), Guide (Tib. Khri ka), Gonghe (Tib. Chab cha) and other predominantly agricultural counties are physically closer to the administrative centres of power and sedentary populations have always been more easily brought under governmental control. Fieldwork in Xunhua, for example, revealed that the *tiaojie weiyuan* system of local mediation committees, established under the government's Regulations on People's Mediation issued in 1989, have been adapted to allow local leaders to mediate village conflicts, often with the help of local monks and lamas. There has, in other words, been considerable synthesis between the Tibetans' traditional practices and the procedures envisaged in the new laws. These procedures work less well in the pastoral

areas, however, where conflict often erupts between tribal groups, rather than within them. One young Tibetan from a farming area in Gonghe spoke adversely of the court system, which is beset by delays, expense and corruption, as well as being largely incomprehensible to many Tibetans. Nevertheless, old practices of compensation have largely died out, he explained, because they are near the town and the police intervene. It is different in the remoter pastoral areas of the county, where there are still principles of revenge, he explained, and the nomads never go to court, even if someone is killed.

The reasons for this, I would suggest, concern the mobility of the nomads and their physical distance from centres of government, but also the nature of the conflict that erupts between the pastoralists' tribes and the character of their mediation. There is very little scope for the transformation of their legal dramas into rituals of the state. The state's system of government and law is essentially directed towards the maintenance of centralised control. The legal system is meant to guarantee peace and order as achievements of the Party-state. The Tibetans' mediation practices, by contrast, are antithetical to the principle of centralised control: they affirm tribal identities and loyalties; they celebrate both individual and group autonomy; they valorise independence and resistance to control; and they avoid the unequivocal affirmation of any type of authority.

The settlement ceremony for the Machu-Henan conflict recorded on the VCD represents the official acceptance, by two administrative counties, of the existing provincial boundary. But for the Tibetans involved, it also represents a failure to settle the conflict between their tribes. Both my Ngulra informants and one of the *zabshad* told me that Jamyang Zhepa had been unhappy with the way the ceremony had been set up. His authority had, effectively, been undermined when the state government refused to endorse his involvement in the 1990s, and his approval of the official settlement was misrepresented during the course of the ceremony. A subsequent, and less public, meeting was also arranged between the Ngulra and Arig leaders in order to ratify the mediated compensation payments. During this meeting one of the Ngulra *gowa* explicitly declared that he did not regard the underlying boundary issue as having been resolved. Others told me that they were merely accepting the settlement to prevent fur-

ther revenge for past injuries and that they would get the land back some day.[13]

What the Machu ceremony, therefore, portrays is the local representatives of government congratulating themselves on settling a conflict. It is a ceremony designed to impress higher officials in the state system by symbolising the successful promotion of peace and harmony, the goal enshrined in the state's expressed ideal of establishing a 'harmony society'.[14] It purports to do two things often attributable to legal ritual: to symbolise and affirm order and unity in the form of shared moral values; and to demonstrate that that order is guaranteed by a higher authority, by the government officials represented on the stage with approval from Jamyang Zhepa. It, thus, symbolises an order guaranteed by the state to whose commands and control the Amdo people have been subject since 1958. As a type of ceremony, however, it is a wholly new invention. As one of my informant from Golok put it, shortly and scathingly, "this is not a Tibetan tradition".

Conclusion

The mediation of feuds between Tibetan pastoralists' tribes still occurs on the Amdo grasslands in a manner which, I have argued, is essentially the same as that described by Ekvall from the 1930s and 1940s: the negotiation between representatives of each side; the agreement of compensation for deaths, injuries and lost property; a demonstrable reluctance on the part of the protagonists to accept compromise; techniques of persuasion employed by the mediators; oratory, tension and,

[13] A similar situation could easily have arisen in the case of the Xunhua-Xiahe dispute. In this case, however, Jamyang Zhepa refused to get involved until he had received direct requests from the provincial governments. Although there was an official stipulation that the boundary line could not be moved, Jamyang Zhepa was able to explain to the parties that he had been part of the committee that had established the boundary line in the first place, along with the Panchen Lama, representing the state, and Sharong Karpo (Bya rung dkar po), representing Qinghai. Since the other two were now deceased, he had explained, that decision could not be questioned. In this way he skilfully avoided the disastrous problems that followed the refusal by the state government to follow his recommendations in the Machu-Henan conflict.

[14] One of my Tibetan informants, an educated girl with a post in government office, commented that the whole ceremony was government propaganda, designed to send a message, especially to other minorities.

finally, an agreement marking an end to the proceedings without, generally, any ceremonial reconciliation. Amdo Tibetans told me repeatedly that government officials cannot make peace in such cases. They have to call in the lamas, *xhombo* or *achung*.

Such processes continue to occur largely because government officials in county and prefecture offices allow them to, and even encourage them, out of a pragmatic need to ensure order is maintained and out of a fear of the consequences of conflict. Spaces are provided within the state structures, both metaphorically and physically, for such processes to occur. This does not, however, represent the transformation of any of their essential elements. Some of the more overtly ceremonial elements have, indeed, disappeared or become more muted: the large meetings on the grasslands or at the monasteries and the displays of weaponry by the mediators. Meetings are now often in Chinese-run hotels and attended by government officials. However, the core of the process is essentially unchanged. This is a legal drama, I have suggested, whose elements affirm tribal, rather than administrative, loyalties, the ongoing potential for feuding relations, the autonomy and defiance of individuals, and the persuasive, but not coercive, power of the mediators. These are symbols of anti-order, not an affirmation of communal values or a celebration of peace and harmony. They represent an alternative morality to that of the state.

Such dramas of anti-order cannot be transformed into rituals of state authority. The Machu ceremony is an illusion. It purports to celebrate the values of peace and harmony established by government officials, who have skilfully promoted a successful mediation amongst Tibetans and obtained for it the blessing of the highest reincarnate lama. It symbolises the authority and sovereignty of the state. But it is a ceremony which masks the fact that a negotiated settlement between two Tibetan tribes, locked in a long-running pasture dispute, has still not been achieved.

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork on which this chapter is based was funded by the Max Planck Instiitute for Social Anthropology, Halle and by the British Academy, to both of which I am very grateful. My thanks are also due to Paul Dresch, David Gellner and David Pratten for their comments on

the analysis of ritual and to Katia Buffetrille and Charles Ramble for their careful editorial input.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bell, C. 1997. *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*. New York: OUP.

Carrasco, P. 1959. *Land and Polity in Tibet*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press.

Dresch, P. 2006. *The Rules of Barat: Tribal Documents from the Yemen*. Sanaa: Centre français d'archéologie et des sciences sociales.

Ekvall, R. 1939. *Cultural Relations on the Kansu-Tibetan Border*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

—— 1964. Peace and war among the Tibetan nomads. *American Anthropologist* 66(5), 1119–48.

—— 1968. *Fields on the Hoof*. Prospect Heights: Waveland.

—— 1981. *The Lama Knows*, Novato, California: Chandler and Sharp.

Geertz, C. 1983. Law as local knowledge. *In* C. Geertz (ed.) *Local Knowledge*. New York: Basic Books.

Gellner, E. 1988. Trust, cohesion and the social order. *In* D. Gambetta (ed.) *Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Gluckman, M. 1965. Politics, *Law and Ritual in Tribal Society*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Hermanns, M. 1949. *Die Nomaden von Tibet*. Wien: Verlag Herold.

Humphrey, C. and J. Laidlaw 1994. *The Archetypal Actions of Ritual: a Theory of Ritual Illustrated by the Jain Rite of Worship*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Just, P. 2007. Law, ritual and order. *In* K. von Benda-Beckmann and F. Pirie (eds) *Order and Disorder: Anthropological Perspectives*. Oxford: Berghahn.

Khoury, P. and J. Kostiner (eds) 1990. *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Levine, N. 1995. From nomads to ranchers: managing pasture among ethnic Tibetans in Sichuan. *In* G. Clarke (ed.) *Development, Society and Environment in Tibet*. Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.

Moore, S. and B. Myerhoff (eds) 1977. *Secular Ritual*. Assen/ Amsterdam: Van Gorcum.

Pirie, F. 2005. Feuding, mediation and the negotiation of authority among the nomads of eastern Tibet. Working Paper of the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle.

—— 2007. Order, individualism and responsibility: contrasting dynamics on the Tibetan plateau. *In* K. von Benda-Beckmann and F. Pirie (eds) *Order and Disorder: Anthropological Perspectives*. Oxford: Berghahn.

—— 2008. Violence and opposition among the nomads of Amdo: expectations of leadership and religious authority. *In* F. Pirie and T. Huber (eds) *Conflict, Religion and Social Order in Tibet and Inner Asia*. Leiden: Brill.

Potter, P. 2005. Governance of China's periphery: balancing local autonomy and national unity. *Columbia Journal of Asian Law* 19: I, 293–322.

Roberts, S. 2005. After government: on representing law without the state. *Modern Law Review* 68(1), 1–24.

Rock, J. F. 1956. *The Amnye Machen Range and Adjacent Regions: a Monographic Study*. Roma: Is.M.E.O.

Shinjilt 2007. Pasture fights, mediation, and ethnic narrations: aspects of the ethnic relationship between the Mongols and Tibetans in Qinghai and Gansu. *In* U. Bulag and H. Diemberger (eds) *The Mongolia-Tibet Interface*. Leiden: Brill.

Turner, V. 1957. *Schism and Continuity in an African Society*. Manchester: University Press.

Wylie, T. V. 1959. A standard system of Tibetan transcription. *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 22, 261–76.

THE ORDINATION OF *DGE SLONG MA*: A CHALLENGE TO RITUAL PRESCRIPTIONS?[1]

NICOLA SCHNEIDER
UNIVERSITÉ DE PARIS X—NANTERRE

For the last twenty years, discussions on the institution of full ordination for women have been recurrent in the Tibetan exile community. The controversial debate and consecutive works of research show the importance Tibetans attach to ritual prescriptions, notably when it is a matter of rituals governed by the code of monastic discipline (*'dul ba*; Skt. *vinaya*) attributed to the Buddha himself. In this article I propose to examine some of the attitudes held and arguments put forward by the different protagonists over the years. These raise a number of questions pertinent to the 'Tibetan tradition' since the latter has come into contact with other cultures and by means of this with 'modern' ideas.

In Tibetan monasticism, nuns (*a ne, jo mo, chos lags* or *dge ma*) are only semi-ordained, that is, they take only the thirty-six vows of a *dge tshul ma* (literally 'one who has virtuous behaviour'; see Table 1).[2] It is commonly accepted that full female ordination—the taking of the 364 vows of a *dge slong ma* (literally 'one who inspires virtue')—has never existed in Tibet, since Indian nuns never came to transmit a lineage of fully-ordained women. However, in the texts of the monastic discipline of the Mūlasarvāstivādin school (*gzhi thams cad yod pa smra ba'i sde*), which Tibetans adopted when monasticism was introduced to Tibet in

[1] I would like to thank Katia Buffetrille for her many corrections and rereads. My thanks also go to Anne-Marie Blondeau, Alexander von Rospatt and Jampa Tsedroen for their suggestions, and to Tashi Tsering, director of the Amnye Machen Institute in Dharamsala, for having generously communicated recent publications in Tibetan.

Tibetan names and terms are transliterated here according to the Wylie system. However, the names of the Tibetan authors of English-language works are presented as they appear in their publications.

[2] Some researchers translate *dge tshul ma* as 'novice'. This Christian term implies that the nun in question is a beginner or somehow inexperienced. Since this is not true for most of the Tibetan *dge tshul ma*, I prefer to keep the original term.

In the *bka' brgyud* school, nuns generally only take the five vows of an ordained layperson (information given by the Karmapa to Jampa Tsedroen)

the 8th century, we find all the ritual rules and procedures for conferring full female ordination. According to these rules, ordination must be preceded by a 'two-year training period' during which the candidate observes twelve preliminary vows (six '"root" tenets' [*rtsa ba'i chos drug*] and six '"associated" tenets' [*rjes mthun gyi chos drug*]) in addition to the vows of a *dge tshul ma*. She is then called *dge slob ma*, female religious trainee (literally 'one who studies virtue'). In the Tibetan tradition, the minor ordination of a woman is conferred by a fully ordained monk and in this way the candidate joins the monastic community.[3] Full ordination, on the other hand, according to the *vinaya* rules of the Mūlasarvāstivādin, requires the intervention of the "dual monastic community" (*dge 'dun sde gnyis*), that is to say, monks and nuns. In the absence of fully-ordained nuns, the full ordination cannot, therefore, take place. A question then arises: how is it possible to institute the ordination of *dge slong ma* for Tibetan nuns? Can the ritual procedures be modified? And if so, how can such a change be legitimised?

In the last twenty years, important changes have taken place in the religious life of Tibetan nuns both in exile and in Tibet proper. Thus, and contrary to the past, nuns today have access to higher studies, they participate in rituals formerly reserved for the male clergy, such as the 'Great Prayer' (*smon lam chen mo*) and the bimonthly 'confession ceremony' (*gso sbyong*),[4] and most of their institutions now function independently from those of monks. To achieve this step and to obtain a status genuinely equal to that of monks, some Tibetan nuns in exile, encouraged by their Western 'sisters', wish to institute full ordination for women in the Tibetan tradition. They are supported by the Dalai Lama, who has continually repeated that full female ordination would be beneficial for Tibet, since this would realise the 'fourfold Buddhist community' (lay followers of the two sexes, *dge slong* and *dge slong ma*) that would make Tibet a 'central land' (*yul dbus*) of Buddha's teachings. However, he has also emphasised the necessity to conduct preliminary investigations to find a means to accomplish this in accor-

---

[3] Contrary to Theravāda Buddhist countries such as Thailand where nuns only have access to the vows of the laity and thus remain excluded from the monastic community.

[4] Most monks and nuns of the monasteries of Dharamsala meet in the main temple (*gtsug lag khang*) for this ceremony; *dge tshul ma* and *dge tshul*, however, take part in only the first part of the ritual act, whereas the second, the main one, is reserved exclusively for the *dge slong*.

Women				Men			
Ordination	Designation	Number of precepts	Requisite age	Ordination	Designation	Number of precepts	Requisite age
Minor ordination	*dge tshul ma* 'one who has virtuous behaviour' *śramaṇerī*	36	12 years	Minor ordination	*dge tshul* 'one who has virtuous behaviour' *śramaṇera*	36	15 years or 'is capable of frightening away crwos'
'Two-year training period' 'Probation period'	*dge slob ma* female religious trainee 'one who stdies virtue' *śikṣamānā*	36 + 12	18 years				
Full ordination	*dge slong ma* 'one who inspires virtue' 'one who is bound by precepts' *bhikṣunī*	364	20 years	Full ordination	*dge slong* 'one who inspires virtue' 'one who is bound by the precepts' *bhikṣu*	253	20 years

[grey box] Stages that do not exist in Tibet

Table 1: Stages of the monastic life according to the code of rules for monks and nuns (*so sor thar pa;* Skt. *prātimokṣa*) of the Mūlasarvāstivādin

dance with monastic discipline, and then to hold discussions with Tibetan and other Asian monastic dignitaries in order to secure their approval. Such a decision, he maintains, cannot come from him alone but must be reached by consensus.

The present article is based on my research at Sgrol ma gling, a nunnery and institute of higher studies for women located near Dharamsala, in India, where I conducted fieldwork on several occasions between 1996 and 2005. Built in 1992, it is today the residence of around two hundred nuns, most of them originally from Tibet. For comparison, I will also refer to the nuns of Bkra shis dgon gsar, a nunnery in eastern Tibet (Mi nyag, in the Chinese province of Sichuan).

I. Context

Western nuns were the first to ask for full ordination. As they could not do this in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition they had adopted, from the 1970s on some of them went to Hong Kong to receive ordination in the Chinese tradition, that of the Dharmaguptaka. On the advice of Si tu Rinpoche (one of the great *karma bka' brgyud* hierarchs), a few Tibetan nuns, supported by the Hong Kong Kagyu Dharma Centre, followed their example: four made the journey to Hong Kong in 1984, followed by four more in 1987.[5] Both the Western and Tibetan nuns were supported in their undertaking by the Dalai Lama, who in 1983 began publicly show his interest in female ordination. On several occasions during his visits to various nunneries in exile he encouraged nuns to continue on this path. However, success was only partial. Even though some Tibetan nuns were now fully ordained, they have achieved their goal in a tradition other than their own, and therefore do not have the right to officiate alongside Tibetan monks and nuns at times of important rituals, such as the bimonthly confession ceremony or the summer retreat (*dbyar gnas*); theoretically they must follow different ritual procedures. It is not very surprising that other nuns have not immediately followed their example and a solution had to be found to reintegrate into the Tibetan tradition these nuns who had been fully ordained in the Chinese Dharmaguptaka lineage.

[5] On the subject of the first—and, to my knowledge, the only—Tibetan nuns ordained as *dge slong ma* cf. Havnevik (1995: 266–67).

In 1987, a few Western nuns of the Tibetan tradition organised the first large international gathering of Buddhist nuns at Bodhgayā. This gathering gave birth to an association called Sakyadhita ('Daughters of the Buddha'). The Dalai Lama, who had been invited, made known his desire to discuss more generally women's rights and to "explore the potential of women within Buddhism".[6] Since then, this association has become an important international Buddhist feminist movement, with the goal of raising the social status of Buddhist women, and to institute full ordination in every country where it does not exist.[7] It has subsequently organised other conferences, in Thailand (1991), Sri Lanka (1993), Ladakh (1995), Cambodia (1997/1998), Nepal (2000), Taiwan (2002), Malaysia (2006), Mongolia (2008) and Vietnam (2009/2010). Numerous national and regional branches have been founded in Asia, the United States and Europe, each arranging its own meetings and conferences.[8] In 1998, members of this movement took part in an international ceremony of full ordination at Bodhgayā, organised by a Taiwanese monastery and conducted under the auspices of three masters of the Chinese tradition, assisted by twenty-two masters from all the various Buddhist traditions.[9]

The Buddhist feminist movement started by Sakyadhita is complex in nature and the members' priorities differ according to their nationalities. I will cite only a few examples: in Asian countries, activities tend towards improving the status of women essentially by raising awareness of existing inequalities and by opening up education for women. For many Westerners, on the other hand, it is a question of putting into practice the 'egalitarian' teaching of the Buddha: Buddhism and feminism are perceived by some as 'two sides of the same coin', insofar as

6 Karma Lekshe Tsomo (1988: 39).

7 On the Sakyadhita website (www.sakyadhita.org/index2.html, access date October 2007), the objectives are listed in the following order: "to promote world peace through the practice of the Buddha's teachings; to create a network of communications for Buddhist women throughout the world; to promote harmony and understanding among the various Buddhist traditions; to encourage and help educate women as teachers of Buddhadharma; to provide improved facilities for women to study and practice the teachings, and finally, to help establish the Bhikshuni Sangha (community of fully-ordained nuns) where it does not currently exist".

8 Wurst (1999) estimates the number of Sakyadhita members at six hundred and those interested at 1,800. According to Gabriela Küstermann from Sakyadhita Germany, there were five hundred members in 2007—a slightly declining number—but two thousand interested parties.

9 Li (1999) gives a detailed description of this ordination ceremony. See also Gellner and LeVine (2005: 189–93).

both tend towards liberation and change.[10] The members of Sakyadhita, and notably the Westerners, are also particularly prolific in their writing: several conference proceedings have been published by the president of the association, Karma Lekshe Tsomo, a Hawaiian nun of the Tibetan tradition and founder of a nunnery in exile.[11] A newsletter is published on Sakyadhita's website, as well as many other articles, either online or in journals and in the press.

Western nuns have exercised a certain influence over Tibetan nuns. Through their founding and financing of several nunneries in exile, they have conveyed some of their feminist ideas.[12] It is in this context that the Tibetan Nuns Project (*bod kyi btsun ma'i las 'char*) was born in 1987. Founded by Rinchen Khando Choegyal (Rin chen mkha' 'gro chos rgyal), the sister-in-law of the Dalai Lama, Lobsang Dechen (Blo bzang bde chen, a Tibetan nun), and Elizabeth Napper, an American Buddhologist—all three former members of the Tibetan Women's Association (*bu med tshogs pa*)—this new association first of all directed its efforts towards the improvement of the living conditions of Tibetan nuns in exile, mostly those recently arrived from Tibet. Two new nunneries were founded in India: Sgrol ma gling and Shug gseb. The association then helped to introduce new study programmes in almost all the nunneries in exile in order to allow nuns to obtain degrees traditionally reserved for men, like the prestigious *dge lugs pa* title of *dge bshes,* 'doctor of traditional (Buddhist) philosophy' or that of the *rnying ma pa, mkhan po*.

---

[10] Cf. Anderson (1997). Western Buddhist nuns are trying to introduce a feminist current that one also finds in Christian theology in the West, see for example Chaves (1997). More generally, on the interest shown in the United States in Buddhism and its practices by some feminist spiritual movements, see for example Gross (1981).

[11] The editor of at least eight books containing articles on full female ordination (1988, 1995, 2000, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2006 and 2008) and a comparative work on the code of rules for nuns in the Tibetan tradition and the Chinese tradition (1997), Karma Lekshe Tsomo has lived and studied Buddhism in the Tibetan community in exile for fifteen years. After having founded 'Jam dbyangs chos gling nunnery, she created the Jamyang foundation, which introduced study programmes for nuns in six other institutions in Ladakh, Spiti and Kinnaur. She is today associate professor in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of San Diego where she teaches Buddhism, World Religion and Comparative Religious Ethics.

[12] Freda Bedi, another Western nun, has founded the nunnery Karma sgrub brgyud dar rgyas gling at Tilokpur, India (cf. Havnevik *op. cit.*: 139). Still others, like for example Dge ldan chos gling and Byang chub chos gling, have received significant financial assistance thanks to the commitment of Western nuns.

Supported by the Dalai Lama and with the backing of some Western nuns, those in charge of the association have at the same time begun to tackle the subject of full ordination by first addressing the Department of Religion and Culture (*bod gzhung chos rig las khungs*), the official authority of the Tibetan government in exile that administers religious affairs. From the beginning, reluctance was great: a circular sent to fifty-five Tibetan hierarchs asking them to express themselves on the institution of full female ordination elicited only eleven responses, five in favour and six against.[13] Likewise, two religious conferences organised under the auspices of the Department of Religion and Culture in 1993 and 1995 proved to be unsuccessful, the participants being insufficiently acquainted with the subject and lacking reliable sources. The Dalai Lama then decided to create a committee of scholars charged with collecting materials and references necessary in order to take a decision. However, only Geshe Tashi Tsering (Dge bshes Bkra shis tshe ring), who at that time was working in the Department of Religion and Culture, took the subject to heart and continued to pursue his research on full female ordination.[14] He went to Taiwan in 1997 to gather information on the Chinese lineage and attended the ordination ceremony at Bodhgayā in 1998. He then presented the results of his research at a seminar which took place in August 1998 at Nor bu gling ka (Dharamsala). Religious dignitaries from the three *vinaya* schools (the Mūlasarvāstivāda, the Theravāda and the Dharmaguptaka) participated. The results of this seminar were published in three volumes by the Department of Religion and Culture.[15] The essential points were as follows:

1. No *dge slong ma* lineage was transmitted to Tibet when monastic lineages were introduced;
2. Several attempts to ordain women in Tibet have taken place in the past, for example those of ’Gro mgon chos rgyal ’Phags pa (1235–1280) and Paṇ chen Shākya mchog ldan (1428–1507), but they were subsequently challenged;
3. In the *Vinayamūlasūtra* (*’dul ba’i mdo rtsa ba*), an extensive treatise on the monastic discipline which summarises the essential meaning of

[13] Thubten Chodron (1994: 39).

[14] From the 1980s, the Dalai Lama has charged Geshe Tashi Tsering with researching the subject of female ordination. The later published, at that time, an article in English (Acharya Tashi Tsering and Russell, 1986).

[15] Cf. Department of Religion and Culture 2002 and Ācārya dge bshes Thub bstan byang chub, *alias* Geshe Tashi Tsering (2000a, 2000b, 2000c).

> the four *Vinayasūtra*, it is stated that full ordination for women must be preceded by a 'two-year training period';
> 4. Finally, the other two Asian lineages were also examined, with the conclusion that there is no uninterrupted Theravāda lineage of fully ordained nuns. On the other hand, there is a living lineage among the Dharmaguptaka in China, Taiwan and Korea, but its validity remains to be determined.

These publications were then sent to two hundred key Tibetan figures (*vinaya* masters, lamas, nuns and scholars) with the request that they comment on them. However, in spite of repeated reminders, only thirteen responses were obtained. They did not present a unanimous opinion.

II. The dilemma for Tibetan nuns

Faced with the silence of the Tibetan dignitaries, the Tibetan Nuns Project decided to rethink its strategies and to prepare the nuns better. When the various exchanges were taking place, it became clear that to succeed, the nuns would first have to demonstrate exemplary behaviour, as much in the strict observance of monastic discipline as in the pursuit of their studies. Their level of studies still being insufficient at that time, it seemed more judicious to pursue their training before taking up the discussions again.

At Sgrol ma gling, the leading institute for the Tibetan Nuns Project—which, as such, serves as its seat—the rhythm of studies was accelerated from that time. The distinctive feature of this institute is that it offers a non-sectarian approach to Buddhism in integrating into its curriculum teachings stemming from all four of the great Tibetan traditions. Its main objective, however, consists of preparing nuns one day to obtain the title of *dge bshes* (*dge bshes ma* in the feminine) through a proposed programme modelled on that of the great Tibetan monastic universities (Dga' ldan, 'Bras spungs and Se ra).

Most of the nuns at Sgrol ma gling have already received minor ordination before joining this nunnery, either in Tibet proper or in exile. Ordination ceremonies are not celebrated at Sgrol ma gling, as in most other nunneries in exile. Not only are there no monks competent to conduct the ritual, most of the candidates these days wish to take their vows from the Dalai Lama: once or twice a year, he personally confers ordi-

nations (minor as well as full) during collective ceremonies organised by his private office, and the directors of Sgrol ma gling then organise the travel for the candidates who wish to participate.

Although candidates for minor ordination are not expected to have an experience of religious life or thorough knowledge of the rules of discipline to follow, many Tibetan monasteries today consider it desirable to prepare their new recruits. For this reason, many offer teachings in the rules of discipline. At Sgrol ma gling the nuns study the 'instructions for the *dge tshul*' in the form of a course in the first year. The text they use has been devised by and for monks,[16] but since the number and the content of the rules are the same at this level, they consider that the nuns can also conform to them.[17] Moreover, even students who have already received ordination some years previously think this course is useful because it allows them to better understand how to match their behaviour to the monastic statues. Others have confided to me their difficulty in integrating certain rules into their daily lives, such as the prohibition against taking meals after midday, or the requirement to sleep in the position of the Buddha—that is, on the right side—without ever turning during the night. Because the studies at Sgrol ma gling require a great deal of effort, concentration and perseverance, some obligations have not been applied to the letter by the nuns. Some nuns have admitted for this same reason that the observance of the rules of a fully-ordained nun could prove to be a further constraint, not only in the pursuit of studies but also for their daily life in general: as one nun explained, it would be difficult to travel using public transport if one wanted to abide by the rule forbidding contact with the opposite sex.

Generally speaking, the nuns of Sgrol ma gling do not have a good knowledge of the rules that fully-ordained nuns must follow. Not having received the ordination themselves, theoretically they do not have the right to undertake an in-depth study of the code of conduct of a *dge slong ma*.

Since the end of the 1990s, the Tibetan Nuns Project has established contacts with women's organisations from other Buddhist countries in order to inquire into and learn about measures taken elsewhere.

---

[16] This is the text *Kā ri kā lnga bcu pa dang de'i mchan 'grel nor bu'i phreng ba* by Mi pham Rinpoche (1846–1912).

[17] It is interesting to note that although there is no systematic teaching of monastic rules at Bkra shis dgon gsar, in Tibet booklets on the 'instructions for *dge tshul*' circulate among some nuns. For the most part, related monks have given them to them.

Lobsang Dechen, co-director of the association, accompanied in turn by nuns from Sgrol ma gling, has taken part in conferences organised by Sakyadhita and has expressed her wish on these and other occasions to institute full ordination in the Tibetan tradition. She also initiated exchanges with a Thai movement, the International Women's Partnership for Peace and Justice, when a conference was organised by the latter in Bangkok in 2002. Two Thai trainers from this organisation were subsequently invited to different Tibetan nunneries in exile to lead workshops with the objective to prepare nuns to 'assume a position of leadership in the field of spirituality, social activity and feminism'.

These various exchanges have allowed Tibetan nuns in exile to enhance their knowledge of the outside world and to understand the issues from a feminist point of view, both Western and Asian. However, this is not to say that they share completely this vision or that they have adopted the more militant attitudes and claims of their sisters. Brought up to present themselves as obedient, humble and modest *vis-à-vis* their masculine superiors, many nuns do not wish to press them on these matters but deem it more desirable to obtain their consent and their support.[18]

Interestingly, there is no debate on the institution of full ordination for women at Bkra shis dgon gsar, the nunnery in Mi nyag where I was able to stay in 2002 and 2003.[19] This can be explained by the fact that this monastery follows the *rnying ma* school, for which monastic discipline generally plays a less important role. But the principal reason is that the nuns there are too preoccupied with the re-establishment of the religious life and by the constant concern for safeguarding what they have regained thus far. In this regard, they are in contact with nuns and monks of surrounding monasteries. In this way, also, they have learned that their exiled sisters today have the possibility of pursuing higher studies, a goal that they share. Their lama, A khu 'Brug grags rgya mtsho, regularly travels to mainland China to give teachings, and two

[18] More generally, Tibetan women do not seem to demand gender equality. On the contrary, for several of my informants, male and female alike, it is the gender difference that is fundamental: according to them, women require more specific protection, for example, when they go for a walk alone, because they are then in danger. It is also interesting to note that the Tibetan Women's Association has emphasised the fact that it distinguishes itself from other women's associations or movements because it does not advocate gender equality (Seele-Nyima 2001: 379).

[19] To my knowledge, full female ordination is not a subject of discussion among the nuns in Tibet proper.

Chinese monks live with him in the monastery. But these contacts are unilateral: they are aimed solely at spreading Tibetan Buddhism—in return for donations, sometimes considerable—and not to integrate elements of Chinese Buddhism. Nevertheless, if one looks closely at the history of Mi nyag, it is also one of the rare Tibetan regions where there is proof of the existence of fully ordained nuns: in the 14th century, a group of *dge slong ma* were among the disciples of a great local scholar, Mkhan chen Bka' bzhi pa chen po Rig pa'i seng ge.[20] But this remains little known locally. It is interesting to note as well that religious authorities, such as Gzan dkar Rinpoche Thub bstan nyi ma, spiritual head of the region and an internationally-known researcher, and 'Jam dbyangs grags pa, monk and professor of Tibetan medicine, do not regard this *dge slong ma* community as a precedent with any modern relevance.[21]

Let us now return to the nuns of Sgrol ma gling and to the immediate utility that the institution of full ordination would have for them. In the framework of their studies intended to lead them to the title of *dge bshes ma*, they are supposed to study monastic discipline in its entirety. For that, as we have seen, they would first need to receive full ordination, which confers the necessary authorisation to go more deeply into the study of these texts. At the end of 2003, the most advanced students successfully undertook the study of the Perfection of Wisdom (*phar phyin*). The following year, they started on that of the Middle Way (*dbu ma*), which takes about two years and which precedes the section on the *vinaya* (*'dul ba*). It was then that those in charge of the Tibetan Nuns Project worried about the organisation of the continuation of their training: it became urgent to resolve the problem of the institution of full ordination. In view of the difficulties encountered, the question also arose of knowing if the study of the *vinaya* might not be shortened or replaced by something else.[22] But this idea was then rejected because of the risk that a *dge bshes* diploma obtained in this way would be depreciated by both the clergy and the laity.[23]

20 *Mkhan chen bka' bzhi pa chen po rig pa'i seng ge'i rnam thar pa yon tan rinpoche'i rgya mtsho* (1287–1375) see his biography in Thub bstan nyi ma (1987: 71–72).

21 From conversations with Gzan dkar Rinpoche and 'Jam dbyangs grags pa. In his article, which summarises the biography of Mkhan chen Bka' bzhi pa chen po Rig pa'i seng ge, 'Jam dbyangs grags pa (1986) does not mention any *dge slong ma* disciples.

22 In Byang chub chos gling nunnery in Mundgod (south of India), study of the *vinaya* was reduced to the section of *dge tshul ma* vows (conversation with Jampa Tsedroen).

23 Some Tibetan scholars criticise the idea of giving the title of *dge bshes* to nuns,

As far as the nuns of Sgrol ma gling are concerned, a significant number of them have left the nunnery at that time. Some chose to pursue their studies on another religious path, like meditation; others left for an institution that allowed them to become teachers or to work in a secular field, and some decided to leave the monastic life altogether. Thus the enthusiasm which has led the nuns, throughout the 1990s and to the beginning of this century, to hope that they might one day obtain the title of *dge bshes* was considerably dampened.

III. The resumption of the debate

Those in charge of the Tibetan Nuns Project, however, remain positive. The director and sister-in-law of the Dalai Lama, Rinchen Khando, explained to me in a conversation in April 2005 that, for her, the opportune time to restart the debate had come because nuns had shown by their determination to pursue the studies and to conform to the discipline, and that they were not only ready to obtain full ordination but that they also merited it. A little earlier, the Tibetan Nuns Project was contacted by Tenzin Palmo (Bstan 'dzin dpal mo) and another Western nun, both being in charge of the nunnery Dga' tshal gling, who also considered that the time had come again to tackle the subject of female ordination. They decided to set up a study committee consisting of Tibetan and Indian nuns, as well as few Western nuns from eight nunneries in exile.[24] Their objective was to resume discussions with the Department of Religion and Culture, several members of which had changed in the meanwhile. Tibetan dignitaries from various schools, such as Pad nor Rinpoche, Sa skya khri 'dzin, 'Dri gung skyabs mgon Che tshang Rinpoche and Mkha' 'gro Rinpoche gave them moral support.[25]

---

arguing that it is a diploma which only the three great monastic universities (Dga' ldan, 'Bras spungs and Se ra) can traditionally confer. Cf. 'Ba' pa Skal bzang 'phrin las 'Bras blo gling (2007: 3).

[24] These nunneries are Sgrol ma gling, Dge ldan chos gling, Shug gseb, Karma sgrub brgyud dar rgyas gling, Sa skya rin chen chos gling, 'Dri gung bsam gtan gling, 'Jam dbyangs chos gling and Byang chub chos gling.

[25] Conversation with Philippa Russell. See also the letters of support published by the organisers of the 2007 international congress: http://www.congress-on-buddhist-women.org/index.php?id=125 (access date October 2007).

After several exchanges, a third seminar of *vinaya* specialists was organised in Dharamsala from 22 to 24 May 2006, and all the high Tibetan dignitaries and some representatives of the Tibetan government in exile were invited. But this meeting was again unsuccessful: the quorum necessary to adopt a resolution was not attained. Of those invited from the high clergy, only the Dalai Lama, the Karmapa, Zam gdong Rinpoche (then Prime Minister of the government in exile) and Geshe Tashi Tsering were present; the others apologised or sent a representative. In view of this meeting, a group of fully-ordained Western nuns who had set up their own committee (the Committee of Western Bhikshunis) had circulated a text requesting, in the name of all nuns of the Tibetan tradition, the re-establishment of full ordination.[26] They also proposed a three-point discussion programme aimed at speeding up the taking of a decision:

> 1. Whether or not it is possible to establish full *bhikṣuṇī* ordination in accordance with the Mūlasarvāstivāda lineage that flourished in Tibet?
> 2. Whether or not there is a way for Tibetan nuns to get full *bhikṣuṇī* ordination within the Dharmagupta *vinaya* tradition that flourished in China?
> 3. Whether or not there is an unbroken lineage of transmission within the system of *vinaya* that spread to Vietnam, as was told to His Holiness the Dalai Lama.[27]

In the introduction to their proposal, the authors justified their action with the statement that "Buddha gave equal opportunities to men and women" and "never made any discrimination between them" (*ibid.*), a declaration that seems to have been badly received. In his inaugural address, Zam gdong Rinpoche stated that on no account was it a matter for approaching the issue of ordination from the angle of redressing gender prejudice.[28] Other participants reproached the Dalai Lama for being under the influence of Western nuns.[29] The meeting then took a

---

[26] This committee was set up at the request of the Dalai Lama in the autumn of 2005 and brings together the following Western *dge slong ma*: Bhikshuni Tenzin Palmo, Bhikshuni Pema Chodron, Bhikshuni Karma Lekshe Tsomo, Bhikshuni Thubten Chodron, Bhikshuni Jampa Tsedroen and Bhikshuni Ngawang Dolma.

[27] The text presented can be found on:

www.thubtenchodron.org/.../a_means_to_achieve_bhiksuni_ordination.pdf (access date January 2009).

[28] Cf. Central Tibetan Administration, press release of 23/05/2006.

[29] Conversation with Tashi Tsering (Amnye Machen Institute) who participated in the seminar.

virulent turn when the representatives of Sa skya khri 'dzin threw the whole project back into question, recalling that the full ordinations initiated by *sa skya* hierarchs in the past (and taking place exclusively before monks) had all been refuted at the same time by their contemporaries.[30] With this intervention, they disagreed with their spiritual head, who had previously appeared favourable to the institution of female ordination.[31]

For lack of finding a consensus, this seminar revealed, above all, two opposed attitudes prevalent among some Tibetan dignitaries: a distrust of what was perceived as meddling on the part of Western nuns and the refusal to discuss a subject classified as closed. In these circumstances, it is perhaps not surprising that the Dalai Lama, principal defender of the nuns' cause, encouraged the Western nuns of the Committee of Western Bhikshunis to organise an international conference.

From 18 to 20 July 2007, the 'International Congress on the Role of Buddhist Women in the Monastic Community'[32] took place in Hamburg, Germany. Organised by Jampa Tsedroen, a Western nun, and held at the University of Hamburg, this congress gathered together for the first time Buddhist dignitaries, followers and researchers from nineteen countries. The objective was to discuss with the present experts the different possibilities of instituting the *dge slong ma* lineage in the Tibetan tradition, and possibly inducing the Dalai Lama to reach a decision in favour of one of them. Without entering into the details of this conference, which I was unable to attend—some publications about the event have appeared in the meanwhile[33]—it is, however, worth underlining the fact that there were not many Tibetan participants. It is also significant that most of those present had previously pronounced themselves in favour of the institution of full female ordination, such as the Dalai Lama, Geshe Tashi Tsering, Rinchen Khando and Lobsang Dechen.

At the end of the congress, two trends prevailed: while the dignitaries from the Theravāda tradition advocated the ordination of Tibetan nuns by Tibetan monks and nuns of the Chinese lineage, some Tibetan

[30] Conversation with Tashi Tsering (Amnye Machen Institute).

[31] It is not surprising that on the subject of the *vinaya*, the *sa skya* monks do not share the opinion of Sa skya khri 'dzin, since the latter is a married religious figure.

[32] For further information, see the website: http://www.congress-on-buddhist-women.org/ (access date October 2007).

[33] Cf. Mohr and Jampa Tsedroen (2010).

nuns expressed their desire to receive ordination by a congregation comprising only *dge slong* of the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition.[34] In this way they sided with the proposal made by Geshe Tashi Tsering and Rin chen dngos grub which, as we shall see, is strongly criticised by other Tibetan *vinaya* specialists.

IV. The divergent views of the Tibetan clergy

Before entering into the detail of different opinion, we should note the almost unanimous refusal of the Tibetan monastic community to involve nuns of the Chinese tradition, a solution nevertheless favoured by the international Buddhist community. For the Tibetans, the prohibition against mingling traditions goes back to the introduction of monasticism under the emperor Khri Srong lde btsan in the 8th century, when the latter authorised the sole tradition of the Mūlasarvāstivādin in Tibet. Their argument is based on the refusal to allow the Indian Atiśa to establish his school, that of Mahāsaṃghika, in 11th century Tibet.[35] However, recent research seems to indicate that this rule has not always been applied. During the congress in Germany, the American nun Thubten Chodron pointed out that in the 9th century, at the time of the so-called persecution of Buddhism, three Tibetan refugee monks in Amdo solicited the aid of two Chinese monks to ordain the Tibetan Dgongs pa rab gsal.[36] This act allowed them to continue their lineage, otherwise threatened with extinction.[37] According to Thubten Chodron,

---

[34] See the summary of the congress on the website of Berzin (2007): http://www.berzinarchives.com/web/x/nav/eb_toc.html_1717379581.html (access date October 2007).

[35] Two texts are accepted as authoritative on this subject: the *Religious history of Vinaya ('dul ba chos 'byung)* by Paṇ chen Bsod nams grags pa (1478-1554) and the *Ethics of Three Codes* (*sdom gsum rab dbye*) by Sa skya paṇḍita Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1182–1251).

[36] Thubten Chodron (2010).

[37] Known by the name "lower lineage" (*smad 'dul*), it is one of the two lineages which have survived in Tibet. The second, called "central lineage" (*dbus 'dul*), was transmitted by the Kashmiri Śākyaśrībhadra in the 12th century, hence its name "lineage of the great scholar [Śākyaśrībhadra]" (*pan chen sdom rgyun*); it is subdivided into four branches (*tshogs pa sde bzhi*) (on this subject see also Jampa Tsedroen 2008: 209). 'Gro mgon chos rgyal 'phags pa and the Mi nyag lama, who conferred full ordination on women, both belong to this lineage (conversation with Tashi Tsering, Amnye Machen Institute). It would therefore be interesting to carry out further research on this particular lineage.

this ordination could constitute a precedent which would authorise the intervention of nuns from the Chinese tradition. But at present her proposal is rejected by the majority of Tibetan dignitaries.[38]

1. The defenders of full ordination for women

If we trust the declarations done by Tibetans in English, it appears that besides the Dalai Lama, many religious dignitaries and politicians have come down in favour of female ordination. This is the case of the Karmapa, several ministers of the Tibetan government in exile,[39] as well as some heads of religious lineages.[40] At the inauguration of the Sgrol ma gling temple in 2005, *bka' blon* (Minister) Blo bzang nyi ma also gave assurances of his support and that of the Department of Religion and Culture.[41] However, Geshe Tashi Tsering and Rin chen dngos grub seem, for the time being, to be the only Tibetan dignitaries to have pronounced themselves of a concrete solution on the institution of full ordination for women: both defend an ordination conferred by an assembly composed of monks only.

As a Tibetan researcher, Geshe Tashi Tsering has certainly made the most detailed analysis of the *vinaya* and of its commentaries written by Indian and Tibetan scholars.[42] He advances several arguments in favour of ordination conferred by monks only. First, he notes that the Buddha does not seem to have had the intention to lay down an exclusive method of ordination but that, quite the contrary, there were different means, of which three were practised for women.[43] None of them, however, can be practised today: two necessitate the presence of *dge slong*

---

[38] Thubten Chodron presented her findings beforehand at Rnam rgyal monastery (Dharamsala, India), where she received a great deal of criticism (conversation with Jampa Tsedroen). Does this reaction indicate that Tibetans monks are not ready to question the authenticity of their own ordination lineages?

[39] Central Tibetan Administration, 23/05/2006.

[40] In spite of their absence at the congress in Germany, several hierarchs have written letters of support to the organisers. These include Sa skya khri 'dzin, the Karmapa, 'Dri gung skyabs mgon Che tshang Rinpoche, Rgyal dbang 'brug pa, Brag g.yab skyabs mgon Rinpoche, Si tu Rinpoche, Se ra byes rgyud smad mkhan zur O rgyan tshe brtan, Mkhan chen Khra 'gu Rinpoche and Se ra byes mkhan po dge bshes Blo bzang dpal ldan.

[41] Central Tibetan Administration, 08/12/2005.

[42] Apart from the three books cited in note 15, see also [Geshe] Tashi Tsering's article (2010).

[43] Tashi Tsering (2010: 164).

ma, a status which, as we have seen, does not exist currently in the Tibetan tradition; and the third is an exceptional case because it was the very first female ordination, that of Mahāprājapatī Gautamī, the aunt and adoptive mother of the Buddha, and her entourage of five hundred women who were ordained by adhering to the so-called 'eight heavy rules' (*lci chos brgyad*).[44]

Geshe Tashi Tsering's main argument is that women could be ordained by the way of the *dge slong* ordination ceremony. This point was suggested, he says, by the Buddha himself when he responded to questions posed by the nun Upalī:[45]

> "Noble One, if a male novice (*dge tshul*) is ordained [as a *dge slong*] by the *dge slong ma* ceremonial rite, is it considered being fully ordained?"
> "Upalī, it is called fully ordained; however, the performers of the ordination have infractions (*'das pa*)."
> "Noble One, if a probationary nun (*dge slob ma*) is ordained by the *dge slong* ceremonial rite, is it considered being fully ordained?"
> "Upalī, it is called fully ordained; however, the performers of the ordination have infractions."

According to Geshe Tashi Tsering, this dialogue was interpreted by some commentators of the monastic discipline as an authorisation given to monks to ordain nuns by the way of the monk rites and vice versa.[46] "It is not [an invalid act] if *dge slong* and *dge slong ma* perform each other's rites", one reads, for example, in a passage of the *Vinayasūtra* (*'Dul ba'i mdo*).[47] A commentary adds the following explanation:

> "It is not [an invalid act] if *dge slong* and *dge slong ma* perform each other's rites" means if a *dge slong* is ordained by the *dge slong ma* rite, it is not unaccomplished [i.e, not invalid] and if a *dge slong ma* is ordained by the *dge slong* rite, it is not unaccomplished. Neither the rite

44 The Buddha is said to have hesitated to accept women into the monastic community, but finally agreed by imposing them the "eight heavy rules". For more details and the consequences that this entails for nuns, who became in fact dependent upon their male counterparts, see, among others, Wijayaratna (1991) and Horner (1989).

45 Excerpt from the *'Dul ba gzhung bla ma* (*Bka' 'gyur*) quoted by [Geshe] Tashi Tsering (2010: 169). Tibetan terms are given for the Sanskrit terms in the English translation of this article.

46 The sources to which Geshe Tashi Tsering refers here include commentaries by the famous Indian *vinaya* master Guṇaprabhā, and by numerous Tibetan scholars such as Rong ston Smra ba'i seng ge rgyal mtshan (1367–1449), Go rams pa Bsod nams seng ge (1429–1489), Ngag dbang chos grags (1572–1641), among others.

47 Guṇaprabhā, *'Dul ba'i mdo* (*Bstan 'gyur*) cited by Tashi Tsering (2010: 169).

> for the full ordination of *dge slong* nor the rite for the full ordination of *dge slong ma* is ultimately the exclusive rite to be used for [its respective ordination alone].... [48]

Geshe Tashi Tsering has not been able to find in the Indian accounts an example where such a procedure has been followed. But in Tibet, there were few cases, such as the ordinations conferred by 'Gro mgon chos rgyal 'Phags pa and by Shākya mchog ldan mentioned above, as well as that of Chos kyi sgron ma, a Tibetan princess of the 15th century who renounced the world and was subsequently considered as an emanation of the deity Rdo rje phag mo.[49] However, because of harsh criticism, none of these ordinations has given rise to an ordination lineage.

Most of the critics in the past, like today, have been concerned by the 'two-year training period' and the subsequent rite (*tshangs spyod nyer gnas*), the pre-ordination rite requested for nuns, which should be conferred solely by a community of fully ordained nuns according to ritual prescriptions. Yet, those ritual masters like Shākya mchog ldan who have given full ordination to women considered that applying the *dge slong* rites to women allowed the 'two-year training period' to be waived. In order to discuss this particular point, Geshe Tashi Tsering proposed first to resolve the three points that long ago gave rise to the problem:

> 1. Whether or not it is appropriate to bestow the *dge slong ma* vow accompanied by an infraction through performing the *dge slong* ceremonial rite.
> 2. Whether [in this case] the *tshangs spyod nyer gnas* ordination is required beforehand.
> 3. Whether the *tshangs spyod nyer gnas* ordination can only be bestowed by the *dge slong ma* community or whether it may also be bestowed by the *dge slong* community when a [Mūlasarvāstivāda] *dge slong ma* community cannot be found.[50]

Geshe Tashi Tsering thus proposes a pragmatic solution without ignoring the instructions given in the Buddhist doctrine, according to which important matters should be resolved through discussion among *vinaya* holders. If Tibetan dignitaries could come to an agreement through dis-

[48] [Geshe] Tashi Tsering (2010: 169). Quotation from the *'Dul ba'i mdo'grel pa mngon par brjod pa rang gi rnam par bshad pa* (*Bstan 'gyur*) by Guṇaprabhā.

[49] On Chos kyi sgron ma, see Diemberger (2007). Martin (2005: 67, 72–73) also gives two examples of fully ordained nuns.

[50] [Geshe] Tashi Tsering (2010: 178–79).

cussing these questions, a new lineage of *dge slong ma* in Tibet could be introduced without any external intervention.

Recently, the young *dge bshes* Rin chen dngos grub has shown interest in finding a solution to the institution of a lineage of *dge slong ma*. Having taught at Sgrol ma gling for a year, he then pursued his own studies at the tantric college of Rgyud stod. In June 2007, he published a book on the subject of *dge slong ma*.[51] Drawing inspiration from the research of Geshe Tashi Tsering, he also refers to a quotation from the 'summer retreat manual' (*lung dbyar gyi gzhi*) in which he sees a further justification for conducting the ordination ceremony with an assembly made up of monks only. It is written that the Buddha allowed *dge slong* to leave the summer retreat for seven days—after requesting permission in an appropriate manner—if they were asked to ordain a *dge tshul ma* or a *dge slob ma*, in spite of the usual prohibition on interrupting the retreat. According to Rin chen dngos grub, this passage implies that *dge slong* performed women's ordinations on their own, and thus corroborates the references revealed by Geshe Tashi Tsering, according to which ordination by monks alone is not an invalid act. Further, he considers that a refusal by the community of *dge slong* to perform full ordination for women would be an offence to the *vinaya* rules as well.

The participation of Rin chen dngos grub at the congress in Germany (2007) was badly received by some dignitaries who did not attend. They criticised him for having spread a slanted interpretation of the *vinaya* and, by extension, the Buddhist doctrine, which constitutes a serious offence according to the doctrine itself. Some of these criticisms have been published in the journal *Tibet Express* (*Bod kyi bang chen*)[52] and have in this way triggered a controversial debate.[53] The question is far from being settled and we do not yet know who is going to prevail. Nonetheless, it is possible even at this stage to present some of the arguments advanced by the opponents.

---

[51] Ser byes lha rams ngag gi dbang phyug Rin chen dngos grub (2007). This book was published with the help of the Tibetan Nuns Project and the Committee of Western Bhikshunis.

[52] Published by the Kha ba dkar po Cultural Centre in India (Dharamsala) since 2003, this journal presents itself as the leading independent daily on Tibetan society. It brings together young writers and scholars who wish to engage in current discussions and debates on Tibetan society. See also the website: http://www.tibetexpress.net/.

[53] It is interesting to note that some authors use scholastic debate language, generally reserved for oral debates.

2. The opponents' criticism

Most of the opponents of full ordination criticised Rin chen dngos grub, and Geshe Tashi Tsering as well, for sowing discord by spreading false interpretations of the *vinaya* texts.[54] They accuse them of using references taken out of context, just as Shākya mchog ldan did in his time, ignoring the ritual apparatus required for full ordination. According to them, Go rams pa Bsod nams seng ge, one of the contemporary opponents of Shākya mchog ldan, is the authoritative master on the subject. They conceive the transformation from postulant to fully-ordained nun[55] to be valid only if the order of ordination rituals and the associated ritual procedures (*cho ga*) are respected: on the one hand, they refuse the idea of excusing the nuns from the two-year training period; on the other hand, they insist on the presence of fully-ordained nuns who, according to them, have an essential role in the performance of both, the *tshangs spyod nyer gnas* (literally 'approaching chastity') and the full ordination (*bsnyen par rdzogs pa*) ceremony.[56]

Theoretically, the two-year training period and the taking of vows that accompanies it concern only the community of *dge slong ma*. Under the responsibility of a preceptor (*dge slob ma yi mkhan po*) and after the approval of the community, the candidate, eighteen years old minimum, is received as '(female) religious trainee' (*dge slob ma*) and commits herself to respect the preparatory vows (*dge slob ma'i sdom pa*)—the six 'root tenets' and six 'associated tenets'. According to Wijayaratna (1991: 45–54), who has studied the Pāli texts, this probationary period allows the candidate to receive the necessary instructions and to familiarise herself with the monastic community before taking the final decision to join the order.[57]

---

[54] One of the critics, Rnam grwa Thub bstan zla wa (04/07/2007: 5), goes so far as to compare Rin chen dngos grub to Glang dar ma (r. 838–842), the Tibetan monarch who persecuted Buddhism according to tradition.

[55] In Tibetan, this transformation is expressed by the terms *gyur* 'to transform, to change' or *skye* 'to be born'.

[56] Cf. Rnam grwa Thub bstan zla ba (04/07/2007), Ser byes bya bral 'Jam dpal blo shor (25/07/2008; 01/08/20070; 09/08/2008), 'Bras sgo mang bya bral Chos grub (12/9/2007) and Rdza chu kha mkhan po Tshe ring bkra shis (15/08/2007).

[57] Wijayaratna points out that there is only very scarce information on *dge tshul ma* in the Pāli texts and that this might be the case because for women the ordination of a *dge slob ma* was previously the equivalent of minor ordination (taking the vows of a *dge tshul*) for monks (1991: 53).

The opponents stress the fact that the rules clearly stipulate the obligation of this procedure and that full ordination would no longer have any meaning if this preliminary step were skipped. They therefore support the necessity of continuity between this stage and complete ordination. Generally, Tibetan tradition emphasises the necessity of succession in both the domain of transmission of ordination lineage and in that of knowledge. In order for a lineage to be considered valid and authentic, and therefore pure, it must be continuous, that is, transmitted in an uninterrupted way (*tshigs snga ma sngon du song ba*, literally 'having previously gone through preliminary links'). And, as some authors underline, if one excuses nuns from the two-year training period and if the *dge slong ma* are not present, the transmission will be broken and it will not be a pure lineage of vows (*sdom rgyun rnam dag*).

If one follows the texts, at the end of her two-year training period, the candidate must solicit her 'female preceptor' (*mkhan mo*) in order to receive full ordination. If her request is agreed to, it is then necessary to assemble the ritual performers who must be made up of twelve *dge slong ma* and ten *dge slong*,[58] themselves ordained for a minimum of twelve and ten years respectively. The first ritual ceremony (*tshangs spyod nyer gnas*) involves only the presence of *dge slong ma*. It is an intermediate stage during which the postulant pronounces the vow of pure conduct (*tshangs par spyod pa*; Skt *brahmacarya*). Philosophically speaking, it is of the same substance as those pronounced by a *dge slob ma*.[59] Then the same day, the *dge slong* join the assembly of *dge slong ma* to perform the full ordination ceremony. Three officiants occupy the role of preceptors (*mkhan po*; Skt *upādhyāya*) and seven that of ritual assistant (*las slob*; Skt *karma ācārya*), according to Thub bstan zla ba, abbot of the Rnam rgyal monastery.[60] More precisely, among the preceptors, there must necessarily be a *dge slong ma*: the 'preceptor of the two-year training period' (*dge slob ma yi mkhan po*); the other two—the 'preceptor of the renunciation ceremony' (*rab byung gyi mkhan po*) and the 'preceptor of the full ordination' (*bsnyen rdzogs kyi mkhan po*)—can be either *dge slong* or *dge*

58 This quorum applies to a 'central country', that is to say, a region where the Buddhist teaching is well established; in 'borderland' countries (in relation to India), the presence of six *dge slong ma* and five *dge slong* is sufficient.

59 Cf. *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* [Great Tibetan-Tibetan-Chinese Dictionary] (1993: 2254).

60 Rnam grwa Thub bstan zla ba (*op. cit.*: 5).

slong ma. According to Thub bstan zla ba, among the ritual assistants two must necessarily be *dge slong ma*: the 'ritual assistant of *dge slob ma*' (*dge slob ma'i las slob*) and the 'ritual assistant of *tshangs spyod nyer gnas*' (*tshangs spyod nyer gnas kyi las slob*); the third—the 'ritual assistant of full vows' (*bsnyen rdzogs kyi las slob*)—is a *dge slong*.

Thub bstan zla ba also emphasises that it is not through the presence of officiating monks (*pha tshogs*) and nuns (*ma tshogs*) that the vows become real, but by their 'combined legal act' (*las tshigs*). More precisely, it is through the crossing (*bsnol*) of the two assemblies' legal acts, that the (pure) vows of a *dge slong ma* are engendered.[61]

Finally, some Tibetan authors specifically oppose the feminist discourse advocated by certain Western nuns.[62] They describe it as aggressive and consider it a criticism of the Buddha, and therefore destructive.[63] Several of them also recall explicitly that the Buddha predicted the rapid decline of the order if women were accepted into the monastic community, alluding to his ambivalent attitude towards women.

The usefulness of the feminist discourse has also been called into question. According to Lhun grub chos ldan,[64] librarian at Se ra byes, if one wants to turn the institution of female ordination into a debate on inequalities, one should take into account the number of vows—many more for women—and the 'eight heavy rules' imposed on women by the Buddha himself; but according to the same author, only a second Buddha would be able to change the rules laid down by Śākyamuni.

Finally, some say explicitly that "the idea of modernising Buddhism must come from inside and not be imposed from the outside".[65]

The writings of the opponents to full ordination reveal a certain ambiguity between the doctrinal reasons referred to above and those that could be described as ideological because of their opposition to the feminist discourse. It is difficult to determine the real motives of each

[61] Rnam grwa Thub bstan zla ba (*op. cit.*: 6), citing, notably, the argument advanced by Go rams pa Bsod nams seng ge.

[62] It must be made clear that the use of the feminist discourse does not mean that there is unanimity among Western nuns: several among them, notably those who follow the Theravāda tradition, refute it also. I thank Jampa Tsedroen for this information.

[63] Cf. Ser byes dpe mdzod drung yig Lhun grub chos ldan (04/07/2007) and Ser byes bya bral 'Jam dpal blo shor (01/08/2007). During a conversation, G.yu thog Karma dge legs, former secretary of the Department of Religion and Culture, confirmed me that this opinion was shared by a great number of Tibetan dignitaries.

[64] Ser byes dpe mdzod drung yig Lhun grub chos ldan (*ibid.*).

[65] Ser byes dpe mdzod drung yig Lhun grub chos ldan (*ibid.*).

party. For their part, the Tibetan nuns also reject feminist ideology, which is too politicised in their eyes. At the congress of 2007 in Germany, some declared in private that they did not want to turn the debate on full ordination into a feminist issue; others expressed their satisfaction with the present conditions of religious practice.[66] They even "read statements that they did not feel ready for *dge slong ma* ordination this time".[67] This caused a feeling of annoyance among the participants, and specially the organisers[68] who were convinced that their Tibetan sisters shared a common goal.[69] In short, not only do Western and Tibetan nuns not agree on the reasons that motivate their demand for full ordination, but the latter seem to want at all cost to avoid a conflict with the male clergy.

Conclusion

The debate on the institution of full ordination for women in the Tibetan tradition, far from being closed, shows that there is little flexibility when it comes to modify the ritual prescriptions stemming from an important corpus like the *vinaya*. The reluctance is considerable in spite of repeated exhortations from the Dalai Lama to find a solution that will be acceptable.[70] For the hierarch the opposition is due to the narrow minds of certain Tibetan dignitaries.[71] In the eyes of Western nuns, the conservative dignitaries are little inclined to open Tibetan monastic hierarchy to nuns. But we can probably see in the full range of reactions a self-protective attitude: the rejection of foreign feminist ideology, just like the recourse to concepts of 'purity' and 'authenticity' of the ordination rites, show that there is a wish to preserve Tibetan

66 I would like to thank Michael Zimmermann for this information.

67 See J. Gyatso (2010: 10).

68 Kawanami (2009: 154). According to the same author many of the Tibetan nuns present at the congress could not understand the discussion since there was no Tibetan translation for the first two days. Besides, they expressed their wish to study more on the subject and to decide their own future. I would like to thank Ayako Itoh for her translation from Japanese.

69 According to Jampa Tsedroen, the organisers were told before the congress that Tibetan nuns present at the previous winter debate session had all agreed to the demand for full ordination.

70 Ser byes dpe mdzod drung yig Lhun grub chos ldan (*op. cit.*: 4) thinks that the part of the clergy in favour of the ordination is a minority.

71 Berzin (2007: 33).

religious practices. We could therefore speak of an identity fallback—mainly from representatives of the *dge lugs* and *sa skya* schools—opposing the contribution of 'modern' feminist and 'progressive' Buddhists ideas. Thus the Karmapa, who was at the beginning in favour of female ordination, explained several months after the congress:

> These days many friends from abroad with a modern viewpoint are giving help and direction to Tibetan nuns and laywomen and I would like to thank them for their help. But I think we need to begin from within our own Tibetan society to find a particular Tibetan way of being modern. The reason for this is that other viewpoints and Tibetan culture are sometimes incompatible, and as Tibetan culture is already endangered, insisting too strongly on imposing other ways of doing things could very well weaken what we are working hard to preserve.[72]

The ambivalent attitude of Tibetan nuns shows that they have little room to manoeuvre. They know that the approval of their clergy is necessary for the achievement of female ordination. Their hesitation seems to indicate that they prefer (at least for the moment) to fall in behind their religious hierarchy, while at the same time keeping distance from their Western sisters. They seem currently to have allied themselves with the opinion of those dignitaries who want to find a solution within their tradition.

Postscript

Several months after the congress in Germany, on 28 and 29 April 2008, the Department of Religion and Culture organised the fourth conference on female ordination. Sixteen Tibetan religious dignitaries from all Buddhist schools were invited and a few nuns from the monasteries of Dharamsala were able to attend as spectators. The discussion focused on the two methods possible for instituting full ordination. The first, which consisted of involving Chinese nuns of the Dharmaguptaka tradition, was rejected unanimously. As for the second method, which relies on Tibetan monks alone, opinions remained divided: the eight representatives of the *rnying ma* and *bka' brgyud* schools voted for and seven from the *sa skya* and *dge lugs* against; one of the *dge lugs* representatives abstained.[73] Some months later, in October 2008, the Cabinet

---

[72] Karmapa (2008).
[73] Information from Jampa Tsedroen.

of Ministers of the Tibetan government in exile (*bka' shag*) reiterated its wish to establish the lineage of *dge slong ma*.[74]

Bibliography

References in Tibetan

Ācārya dge bshes Thub bstan byang chub (alias Geshe Tashi Tsering), 2000a. *Gzhi smra'i lugs kyi dge slong ma'i las chog gcig tu btus pa thub dbang zhal lung zhes bya ba*, New Delhi: Indraprastha Press.

—— 2000b. *Bod du dge slong mar bsgrubs pa'i dpyad gzhi rab gsal me long*, New Delhi: Indraprastha Press.

—— 2000c. *Dge slong ma'i 'byung khungs dpyad gzhi*, New Delhi: Indraprastha Press.

'Ba' pa Skal bzang 'phrin las 'Bras blo gling, 22/08/2007. Dge bshes ma las 'phros pa'i dran rtogs thung ngu, *Bod kyi bang chen* 138, 3.

'Bras sgo mang bya bral Chos grub, 12/09/2007. Nga'i lta ba dang ma mthun na lta log zer gyi med, *Bod kyi bang chen* 141, 2.

Rdza chu kha mkhan po Tshe ring bkra shis, 15/08/2007. Dge slong ma'i skor gyi bsam gzhig, *Bod kyi bang chen* 137, 2.

'Jam dbyangs grags pa, 1986. Mi nyag mkhas pa'i mi lnga'i lo rgyus rags bsdus, *Gangs dkar ri bo* 2, 64–76.

Rnam grwa Thub bstan zla wa, 04/07/2007. Bud med bsnyen rdzogs bsgrub par dge slong pha ma gnyis tshogs tshang dgos, *Bod kyi bang chen* 131, 5–6.

Ser byes bya bral 'Jam dpal blo shor, 25/07/2007. Dge slong pha kho nas ma bsnyen par rdzogs chog pa'i yig don la bltas pa'i bsam 'char, *Bod kyi bang chen* 134, 2.

—— 01/08/2007. Dge slong pha kho nas ma bsnyen par rdzogs chog pa'i yig don la bltas pa'i bsam 'char, *Bod kyi bang chen* 135, 2, 5.

—— 09/08/2007. Dge slong pha kho nas ma bsnyen par rdzogs chog pa'i yig don la bltas pa'i bsam 'char, *Bod kyi bang chen* 136, 2.

Ser byes dpe mdzod drung yig Lhun grub chos ldan, 04/07/2007. Mo chos ring lugs kyi lta ba'i rmang gzhi las byung ba, *Bod kyi bang chen* 131, 4.

Ser byes lha rams ngag gi dbang phyug Rin chen dngos grub, 2007. *Dge slong ma'i dka' gnad brgya pa sngon med legs par bshad pa'i gter dgos 'dod kun 'byung baidurya'i phung po*, Sidhpur: Tibetan Nuns Project.

Thub bstan nyi ma (ed.) 1987. *Mi nyag mkhas dbang lnga'i rnam thar,* Chengdu: Si khron rigs dpe skrun khang.

References in Western languages

Acharya Tashi Tsering and P. Russell 1986. An Account of the Buddhist Ordination of Women. *Chö-Yang* 1(1), 21–32. See also [Geshe] Tashi Tsering.

Anderson, S. 1997. Feminismus, Buddhismus und gesellschaftlicher Wandel. http://www.buddhanetz.org/texte/frauen.htm (access date October 2007).

Berzin, A. 2007. *A Summary Report of the 2007 International Congress on the Women's Role in the Sangha: Bhikshuni Vinaya and Ordination Lineages*

[74] Cf. Central Tibetan Administration, press release of 15/10/2008.

University of Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany 18-20 July 2007 August 2007, Part 1. http://www.berzinarchives.com/web/x/nav/eb_toc.html_1717379581.html (access date October 2007).

Central Tibetan Administration 08/12/2005. His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Inaugurate Dolma Ling Nunnery. *TibetNet.* http://www.tibet.net/en/flash/2005/1205/08B1205.html (access date October 2007).

—— 23/05/2006. His Holiness Opens Seminar on Bhikshuni Ordination of Buddhist Nuns. *TibetNet.* (http://www.tibet.net/en/index.php?id=1184&articletype=flash-old&rmenuid=morenews) (access date January 2007).

—— 15/10/2008. Kashag Outlines Policies on Women Empowerment. *TibetNet* http://www.tibet.net/en/index.php?id=457&articletype=flash (access date October 2008).

Chaves, M. 1997. The Symbolic Significance of Women's Ordination. *The Journal of Religion* 77(1), 87–114.

Department of Religion and Culture (ed.) 2002. *Concerning the Lineage of Bhikshuni Ordination: Proceedings of the Seminar of Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharamagupta Vinaya Holders*. New Delhi: Indraprastha Press.

Diemberger, H. 2007. *When a Woman Becomes a Religious Dynasty: The Samding Dorje Phagmo of Tibet*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Gellner, D. and S. LeVine 2005. *Rebuilding Buddhism: The Theravada Movement in Twentieth-Century Nepal*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Gross, R. 1981. Feminism from the Perspective of Buddhist Practice. *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 1, 73–82.

Gyatso, J. 2010. Female Ordination in Buddhism: Looking into a Crystal Ball, Making a Future. *In* T. Mohr and Jampa Tsedroen (eds), *Dignity and Discipline. Reviving Full Ordination for Buddhist Nuns*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1–22.

Havnevik, H. 1995. *Combats des nonnes tibétaines*. Paris: Dharma.

Horner, I.B. 1930 [1989]. *Women under Primitive Buddhism: Laywomen and Almswomen*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.

Jampa Tsedroen 2008. Generation to Generation: Transmitting the Bhikṣuṇī Lineage in the Tibetan Tradition. *In* Karma Lekshe Tsomo (ed.) *Buddhist Women in a Global Multicultural Community*. Kuala Lumpur: Sukhi Hotu Publications, 205–215.

Karma Lekshe Tsomo (ed.) 1988. *Daughters of the Buddha*. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications.

—— (ed.) 1995. *Buddhism Through American Women's Eyes*. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications.

—— 1997. *Sisters in Solitude. Two Traditions of Buddhist Monastic Ethics for Women: A Comparative Analysis of the Chinese Dharmagupta and the Tibetan Mūlasarvāstivāda Bhikṣuṇī Prātimokṣa Sūtras*. Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications.

—— (ed.) 1999. *Innovative Buddhist Women: Swimming against the Stream*. Richmond: Curzon.

—— (ed.) 2000. *Buddhist Women Across Cultures*. New Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications.

—— (ed.) 2004a. *Bridging Worlds: Buddhist Women's Voices Across Generations*. Taipei: Yuan Chuan Press.

—— (ed.) 2004b. *Buddhist Women and Social Justice: Ideals, Challenges, and Achievements*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

—— (ed.) 2004c. *Discipline and Practice: Buddhist Women Past and Present*. Honolulu: Sakyadita.

—— (ed.) 2006. *Out of the Shadows: Socially Engaged Women*. Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications.

—— (ed.) 2008. *Buddhist Women in a Global Multicultural Community.* Kuala Lumpur: Sukhi Hotu Publications.

Karmapa 2008. Nun's Education and Conduct in Modern Times. URL : http://www.kagyuoffice.org/PastActivities-09-JantoMarch.html#NunsEducationandConductinModernTimes (access date mai 2010).

Kawanami, H. 2009. Bukkyô wo hiraku asia no josei tachi [Asian women who pioneer Buddhism]. *In* Kokusai shûkyô kenkûjo [International Institute for the Study of Religions] (ed.) *Gendai Shûkyô. Henkaku ki no asia to shûkyô* [Contemporary Religion. Asia and Religion in Change], 132–163.

Li, Y. 1999. Ordination, Legitimacy, and Sisterhood. *In* Karma Lekshe Tsomo (ed.) *Innovative Buddhist Women: Swimming against the Stream*. Richmond: Curzon, 168–198.

Martin, D. 2005. The Woman Illusion? Research into the Lives of Spiritually Accomplished Women leaders of the 11th and 12th Centuries. *In* J. Gyatso and H. Havnevik (eds) *Women in Tibet*. London: Hurst and Co., 49–82.

Mohr, T. and Jampa Tsedroen 2010. *Dignity and Discipline. Reviving Full Ordination for Buddhist Nuns*. Boston: Wisdom Publications.

Seele-Nyima, C. 2001. *Tibetische Frauen zwischen Tradition und Innovation. Eine Untersuchung zum soziokulturellem Wandel im indischen Exil*. Hamburg: LIT-Verlag.

Smith, G. 2001. *Among Tibetan Texts. History and Literature of the Himalayan Plateau*. Boston: Wisdom Publications.

Tashi Tsering, Geshe 2010. A Lamp of Vinaya Statements: A Concise Summary of Bhikṣunī Ordination (original title: *'Dul ba'i lung gi sgron me/ dge slong ma'i skor nyams zhib snying bsdus nyung gsal*, 2007, translated into English by Dr Ckok Tenzin Monlam and revised subsequently by the editors). *In* T. Mohr and Jampa Tsedroen (eds) *Dignity and Discipline. Reviving Full Ordination for Buddhist Nuns*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 161–182.

Thubten Chodron 1994. L'évolution du bouddhisme en Occident: un regard féminin. *Actualités tibétaines* 5(1), 39.

—— 2010. A Tibetan Precedent for Multi-tradition Ordination. *In* T. Mohr and Jampa Tsedroen (eds) *Dignity and Discipline. Reviving Full Ordination for Buddhist Nuns*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 183–194.

Wijayaratna, M. 1991. *Les moniales bouddhistes: naissance et développement du monachisme féminin*. Paris: Cerf.

Wurst, R. 1999. Aufgaben und Zielsetzungen von Sakyadhita im Westen. *Journal of Religious Culture*, 27–12 (http://web.uni-frankfurt.de/irenik/relkultur27-12.html) (access date October 2007).

Dictionaries

Bod rgya tshigs mdzod chen mo 1993. Beijing: mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2 volumes.

Tsepak Rigzin 1997. *Tibetan-English Dictionary of Buddhist Terminology (Revised and Enlarged Edition)*. Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives.

PRESERVATION AND TRANSFORMATIONS OF LITURGICAL TRADITIONS IN EXILE: THE CASE OF ZHE CHEN MONASTERY IN BODNATH (NEPAL)

MIREILLE HELFFER
CENTRE NATIONAL DE LA RECHERCHE SCIENTIFIQUE

The mother monastery of Zhe chen bstan gnyis dar rgyas gling, the 'Continent where sūtra and tantra flourish', located in Kham, was founded in 1735 by the second incarnation of the Rab 'byams lineage: Zhe chen Rab 'byams II, 'Gyur med kun bzang rnam rgyal (1716–1769). According to Matthieu Ricard, the name Zhe chen itself corresponds to a locality, referring to a valley a little larger than its neighbour Zhe'u chung.[1]

According to "The inventory of *rnying ma* monasteries of Tibet" (*Bod na bzhugs pa'i rnying pa'i dgon deb*, T.S. 13: 78–79),[2] the monastery had about two hundred monks and nine reincarnate lamas (*sprul sku*) before the Chinese occupation. It was not the most important of the great monasteries of this school which flourished in the 17th century; in chronological order of their construction, these are as follows:[3]

> Thub bstan Rdo rje brag (founded about 1610): two hundred monks and three *sprul sku.*
> Kaḥ thog Rdo rje gdan (founded in 1656): eight hundred monks and seven *sprul sku.*
> Dpal yul (founded in 1665): six hundred monks and seven *sprul sku.*
> O rgyan Smin grol gling (founded in 1676): four hundred monks and three *sprul sku.*
> Rdzogs chen (founded in 1685): eight hundred and fifty monks and eleven *sprul sku.*

---

1 E-mail of 13 July 2008 in which he adds that "the most common etymology comes from 'the big backbone' (*ze chen*), in reference to a hill that dominates the Shechen valley, facing the monastery, and which is a little similar to the bent back of a dragon".

2 For the convenience of the reader, Tibetan sources (T.S.) are indicated by a number, and the complete references are given in the Bibliography.

3 Most of these monasteries have been established again in exile.

Zhe chen monastery was part of the group of *rnying ma* monasteries considered to be 'the big three of Kham', referred to collectively by their three initial syllables: KA thog, DPAL yul and ZHE chen. Among the great figures who contributed to Zhe chen's renown, one who is worthy of note is Zhe chen dbon sprul 'Gyur med mthu stobs rnam rgyal, who left his mark during the early decades of the 19th century and who was teacher to the most important figures of the 'non-sectarian' (*ris med*) movement: 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas (1811–1899), Dza' Dpal sprul (1808–1887) and 'Jam dbyangs Mkhyen rtse dbang po (1820–1892).[4] He spent three years at Smin grol gling, where he was educated in all aspects of liturgical life: rituals, chanting (*dbyangs*), dance and *maṇḍala*-construction. He transmitted his knowledge to a certain Dbang chen 'bum, enjoining him to write out a complete set of ritual manuals (cf. note 9).

The end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th were marked by two great masters: Rgyal tshab O rgyan theg mchog rdo rje, alias 'Gyur med padma rnam rgyal (1871–1926)—a disciple of Ju Mi pham (1846–1912)—and Zhe chen Kong sprul Padma dri med (1901–1960).

Zhe chen monastery suffered serious damage during the Cultural Revolution. Its restoration was progressive. It began in the 1980s and was stimulated and supported by the 1985 and 1988 visits of Dil mgo Mkhyen rtse rin po che (henceforth Khyentse Rinpoche), later accompanied by his grandson, Zhe chen Rab 'byams (henceforth Rabjam Rinpoche), who was born in 1966 and recognised as the seventh incarnation of the Zhe chen lineage.

I. The new Zhe chen in exile, in Nepal

Khyentse Rinpoche received most of his education at the Zhe chen mother monastery in Tibet, before devoting himself to years of solitary meditation. In 1959, following the Chinese invasion, he took refuge in Bhutan and became chaplain to the queen mother. At the beginning of the 1980s, he decided to build a new Zhe chen in exile. The choice of the site of Bodnath (Tib. Bya rung kha shor) stood out—no doubt because of the role played by Padmasambhava in the founding legend

4 Smith (2001: 20).

of the *stūpa*,[5] quite like the place occupied by this *stūpa* in the religious geography of Tibetans. The Bhutanese royal family then became the principal donor (*sbyin bdag*) to the new Zhe chen. The murals and statues have been therefore executed by Bhutanese artists and many Bhutanese novices are trained in this monastery. These close ties with Bhutan were further reinforced by the fact that Rabjam Rinpoche was born in Bhutan of a Bhutanese father, and Khyentse Rinpoche died and was cremated in Bhutan.

There is no doubt that the French monk Matthieu Ricard has played a major role in the influence the Nepali monastery of Zhe chen has today. First, private secretary to Khyentse Rinpoche, then indispensable assistant to Rabjam Rinpoche, he subsequently became the French translator for the Dalai Lama and wrote several books that became well known among the general public. He was at the centre of all the plans subsequently developed at the monastery. Thanks to his knowledge of Tibetan, his remarkable qualities as an organiser, writer and photographer, and thanks also to multiple relationships facilitated by his family connections, he was able to mobilise the expertise needed for these projects: computer experts, architects, doctors and laboratories, as well as the resources provided by various donors in the Western world.

I shall briefly review the developments I have witnessed since my first visit to the monastery in 1989, and up to 2001, dealing successively with the structures, organisation of liturgical life, publications, translations and humanitarian aid.

1. The monastery and its outbuildings

The construction of the monastery and its outbuildings started at the beginning of the 1980s, in honour of Rabjam Rinpoche. It began with the buildings for religious use. The main building comprises the assembly hall (*'du khang*), on the ground floor, abundantly decorated with murals. On the first floor up are the apartments of Khyentse Rinpoche as well as a private chapel dedicated to Tārā, and on the second floor is the library. One of the distinctive features of the monastery is the location of the chapel dedicated to Padmasambhava and his twenty-five disciples (*rje 'bangs*): it is situated behind the main building in a separate pavilion.

[5] On this subject, see Blondeau (1994: 31–48).

The monks' private quarters, the dormitories and the classrooms for the younger monks, the eight *stūpa*, and the comfortable Rabsel Guest House inaugurated in 1995 were built next. These were followed, from December 1997, by the Tsering Art School devoted to the teaching of painting and the preservation of archives, the philosophical college (*bshad grwa*) and finally the clinic. The Namo Buddha (Tib. Stag mo lus sbyin) retreat centre was built outside Bodnath, but still within the Kathmandu Valley. Mention should also be made of dependencies outside Nepal; the branch of Zhe chen built at Bodhgayā in India under the supervision of a French architect and inaugurated in 1996,[6] the many religious centres affiliated to Zhe chen in France and abroad, as well as the Karuna association which develops many humanitarian projects not only in Nepal but also in Kham and Amdo.

2. *Organisation of liturgical life*

The liturgical practices of the Zhe chen monks follow the Smin grol gling (*smin lugs*) tradition transmitted to the Zhe chen mother monastery through the Rab 'byams lineage.

The *dkar chag* of Smin grol gling (T.S. 8: 178–221) sets out the ceremonies to be performed each month, specifying several details. The programme is filled with an abundance of rituals called "of great fulfilment" (*sgrub* [*thabs*] *chen* [*po*] or *sgrub mchod,* rituals of "great fulfilment" but of shorter duration than the former), with or without dances (*'cham*), and with or without the ritual of exorcism (*gtor zlog*) which includes the casting of a magic weapon (*zor*).

1st month	– from the 9th to the 16th day: *Skye bdun ril sgrub chen mor smin lugs yang snying 'dus pa*, celebration of a great ritual of the blessing of the pills (*ril sgrub*) according to the Smin grol gling tradition

[6] It was the Nepali Zhe chen that was entrusted with the organisation of the Bodhgayā smon lam chen mo in 1995. On *smon lam chen mo*, see Buffetrille and Schneider in this volume.

3rd month	– from the 3rd to the 10th day: *Rat gling tshe sgrub sgrub mchod*, celebration of a longevity ritual (*tshe sgrub*) which takes place in a *sgrub mchod*, performed according to the Ratna gling pa tradition. – from the 23rd to the 30th day: *Bka' ma'i tshogs khag drug dang sgyu 'phrul khro bo'i rtsa 'cham bcas*, celebration of a six-part ritual of *tshogs* offerings stemming from the *bka' ma* tradition with ritual dances associated with the tantra of the "Net of illusions" (*Sgyu 'phrul dra ba*).
4th month	– from the 9th to the 16th day: *Bka' brgyad sgrub chen gar 'cham dang bcas pa*, celebration of the *sgrub chen* of the *bka' brgyad*, with ritual dance. – from the 24th to the 27th day: *Bde gshegs kun 'dus dang rab gnas dge legs 'dod 'jo*, the consecration ritual entitled Dge legs 'dod 'jo.
5th month	– from the 3rd to the 10th day: *Bla ma gsang 'dus dang / sprel zla'i tshes bcu chen mo'i spros bcas gar 'cham bcas,* in exile: the celebration moved to the 2nd month of the great ritual of the 10th day of the month of the monkey, according to the *gter ma* of the *Bla ma gsang 'dus* with ritual dances (cf. T.S. 2: 203–64). – from the 14th to the 21st day: *Smin gling rdor sems sgrub mchod*, in exile: the celebration moved to the 2nd month of a *sgrub mchod* in honour of Vajrasattva, according to the Smin grol gling tradition.
6th month	– from the 1st to the 7th day: *Gsang gsol bde legs kun 'byung dang dngos sgrub rol mtsho*, celebration of the ritual of the protectors entitled "*dngos sgrub rol mtsho*".[7]
7th month	– *Dbyar gnas*, summer retreat.

[7] For a presentation of this text, cf. Kohn (2001: 35–47 and T.S. 2: 267–425).

8th month	– from the 9th to the 16th day: *Kar gling zhi khro'i gnas stong*, celebration of the peaceful and fierce deities, according to the Karma gling pa tradition.
9th month:	– from the 15th to the 21st day: *Skyabs rje mkhyen rtse rdo rje 'chang gi dus mchod la nyid kyi dgongs gter rang 'byung Padma'i snying thig gi sgrub mchod*, celebration of a *sgrub mchod* based on the *gter ma* discovered by Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche and entitled *Padma'i snying thig*. – from the 23rd to the 30th day: *Phur pa king kang gi gtor zlog*, celebration of a *gtor zlog* relating to a form of Vajrakīla called *kin kang*.
10th month:	– from the 23rd to the 30th day: *Rat gling phur pa yang gsang gi gtor zlog/ de mtshams nyin gnyis smin gling dngos rol gdungs dbyangs rgyas pa*, celebration of a *gtor zlog* based on the *Phur pa yang gsang* of Ratna gling pa, and two days after, repetition of the ritual of the protectors according to the Smin grol gling tradition (*smin gling dngos rol*: cf. above, in the 6th month) in its expanded form.
11th month:	– from the 23rd to the 29th day: *Bka' brgyad khro bo rol ba'i gtor zlog,* celebration of a *gtor zlog* of rejoicing for the deities of the *bka' brgyad*.[8]
12th month:	– from the 23rd to the 30th day: *Lo 'jug dus rim chen mor smin lugs 'jam dpal gshin rje dregs pa 'joms byed kyi gtor zlog*, celebration of the *gtor zlog* of the end of the year according to the Smin grol gling tradition, and according to the *gter ma* [discovered by Gter bdag gling pa] of Yamāntaka under the form called 'Jam dpal gshin rje dregs pa 'joms byed (cf. T.S. 2: 509–624).

Each year, since 1995, Zhe chen monastery, like other institutions in exile, publishes a calendar in English providing the corresponding dates on the Western calendar. The calendar indicates the days of the month which, throughout the year, are devoted to a particular religious

[8] Cf. Cornu (2001: 276–278), under *kagyé*.

practice: the 8th day for the Buddha of medicine, the 10th day for Guru Rinpoche, the 15th day for the Buddha Amitābha, the 25th day for the *ḍakinī*, the 29th day for the protectors (*chos skyong*), the 30th day for the Buddha Śākyamuni, and the collective confession rituals (*gso sbyong*), for which the days vary.

Added to these are a great number of annual celebrations: the four celebrations of the Buddha (*dus chen bzhi*) common to all the orders of Tibetan Buddhism; the summer retreat (*dbyar gnas*); the *gtor zlog* or *dgu gtor* of the 12th month, intended to remove the pollution of the year past and to ward off the dangers of the year to come; and especially the numerous birthdays of the religious masters, with priority given to those of the *rnying ma* and *ris med* traditions: Klong chen rab 'byams pa (1308–1364);[9] 'Jams dbyangs mkhyen brtse dbang po (1820–1892); Dpal sprul Rinpoche (1808–1887); Mchog 'gyur gling pa (1829–1870);[10] Mkhyen brtse chos kyi blo gros (1893–1959); 'Jams mgon Kong sprul (1811–1899); Zhe chen Rgyal tshab (1871–1926) and, more recently, Bdud 'joms Rinpoche (1904–1987) and Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche (1910–1991).

In addition to these fixed dates there are the celebrations of particular *sgrub chen* and *sgrub mchod*, like those which now take place during the first month of the year: "Great assembly of the peaceful and the wrathful" ([*zhi khro*] *tshogs chen 'dus pa*), which was held for the eighth time in 1993; the "Smin sgrol gling Vajrasattva [Vajrasattva according to the Smin sgrol gling tradition]" (*smin gling rdor sems*), which took place for the fifth time in 1993; and the solemn celebration of the birth of Guru Rinpoche with the *tshes bcu* of the 10th day of the 2nd month, which will be discussed below.

The desire to maintain the authenticity of liturgical traditions is seen in the use of manuals developed at the mother monastery. Thanks to the active participation of the Nepal Research Centre, these have been carefully photographed in the framework of the Nepal German Manuscript Preservation Project (NGMPP), founded in 1970, and later reproduced in easy-to-use *dpe cha* format in a limited edition. These include, in particular, manuals relating to vocal practice (*dbyangs yig*), dances (*'cham yig*) and finally to 'practical procedures' (*lag len*), which make it possible to coordinate the various aspects of the practice.

---

9 On this subject, see Arguillère (2007).

10 Cf. Orgyen Tobgyal ([1982] 1988; transl. Tulku Jigmay and Erik Pema Kunsang).

The *dbyangs yig* manuscripts, intended for the chant masters (*dbu mdzad*), were the subject of a publication in 1998 (T.S. 2). They comprise six manuals corresponding to the rituals stemming from the main 'treasure texts' (*gter ma*) of the tradition, namely: the *bka' brgyad* (pp. 1–200); the *Bla ma gsang 'dus* (pp. 203–64); the *chos skyong* (pp. 267–425); *Guru drag po* (pp. 439–474); the *Le'u bdun ma* (pp. 475–508); and finally *Gshin rje gshed* (pp. 509–624).

Manuscript copies (in cursive script, *dbu med*) of two *'cham yig*, normally intended only for the 'dance master' (*'cham dpon*), have been computerised in *dbu can* (T.S. 3) and printed in *dpe cha* format. They contain an outline of the dances to be performed with indications of each of the texts set out simultaneously by the chant master; but they also provide instructions relating to ritual actions, instrumental sequences, choreography and body movements. Although these *'cham yig* are not signed, it is easy to see that the terminology used is identical not only to that of the *'cham yig* appearing in the complete works of Smin gling Lo chen Dharma śrī (1654–1717, T.S. 11) but also to that of the *'cham yig* known as 'from the 5th Dalai-Lama' published in Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976).

The two volumes that are devoted to ritual performance according to the Zhe chen tradition (*Zhe chen lugs srol cho ga'i lag len skor*, T.S. 4) summarise all the actions combined in the celebration of the rituals and are consulted mainly by the 'master of tantric ritual' (*rdo rje slob dpon*) and the 'chant master'.[11] In addition to these publications, which are essential to the liturgical life of the monastery, a major programme of translation into French and/or English, German or Spanish is being undertaken by the Association Padmakara, which was created in France in 1987. However invaluable access to all these texts of the Zhe chen tradition might be, they were insufficient to ensure accurate transmission. The wish to remain faithful to the oral tradition inherited by the

[11] They include: Vol. 1: *sgrub chen bka' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa'i lag len gsal byed nyin mor byed pa'i 'od snang* pp. 1–103; *bka' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa'i bdud rtsi sman sgrub kyi lag len bdud rtsi'i thig pa pp. 104–140; bla ma gsang 'dus pa'i sgo nas spros bcas tshes bcu'i chen mo'i lag len dngos sgrub char 'bebs* pp. 141–192. Vol.2: *bka' brgyad khro bo'i rol pa'i lag len reg gzig tu bkod pa 'khrul bral kun gsal me long* pp. 1–60; *'Jam dpal gshin rje dregs pa 'joms byed kyi gtor zlog lag len* pp. 61–190, the composition of which is due to Dbang chen 'bum. These were published in 2000 and 2001 within the framework of the 'Shechen Foundation Project', supported by the European commission for the 'Preservation and Dissemination of Texts essential to safeguard the Identity of Tibetan Culture'.

elderly monks led very early on to the invitation to Nepal of two chant masters, and then a dance master, who had held these positions at the mother monastery. There then ensued a series of projects that I was able to follow between 1989 and 2001, and that I would like briefly to report on here.

From 1986, Rabjam Rinpoche has made cassette recordings (separate from the 'live' performance) of the content of several *dbyangs yig* with Padma dri med, an elderly chant master from the mother monastery. During my first visit I was able to make a copy of these recordings and to begin to understand the relationship between notation and actual expression.

In 1989, when I was at Zhe chen, the position of chant master was held by a monk who was full of good will but who had little experience, and whose vocal abilities were limited. The arrival of a chant master from Tibet was eagerly awaited. The musical situation changed radically with the coming of this *dbu mdzad*, named 'Gyur med 'jigs med and known as 'the bearded one' (Ricard 1996: 21). He took up his duties in 1990. He had a powerful voice, knew the traditions well and dextrously handled the *rol mo* cymbals, which coordinate all the musical aspects of a ritual. However, he had a difficult character and was greatly feared by his students. The younger *dbu mdzad* Nor bzang who succeeded him in 1995 also came from Tibet. At the request of Rabjam Rinpoche, I was able to record with him the entirety of the two *dbyangs yig* used during the celebration of the *gtor zlog* at the end of the year—the one relating to the 'protectors' (*chos skyong*) and that of Gshin rje gshed (the *yi dam* of the monastery)—totalling about nine hours of recordings, subsequently copied onto audio CD.

The presence of these experts has allowed the setting up of photographic, film and music archives now kept at the Tsering Art School.

Since 1997, young monks trained *in situ* have filled the position of *dbu mdzad*. The first of these, of Bhutanese origin, was 'Gyur med 'jigs med, known as 'Kampe', himself an excellent dancer. He was the chant master in charge when the CD "Sounds of Tibet", released by the monastery in 1997, was recorded.

II. Preserving liturgical traditions: the example the great celebration of the 10th day [of the month] (*tshes bcu chen mo*)

I have chosen to illustrate my point with this example for several reasons: first, because of the exceptional place held by Padmasambhava—also called the 'Precious Master' (Guru Rinpoche)—in all the Tibetan religious lineages, and identified, as we know, as the second Buddha in the *rnying ma* tradition.[12] Another reason is the fact that I personally attended several *tshes bcu* celebrations in different contexts. The climax of this ceremony is the arrival of the eight manifestations of Padmasambhava (*Guru mtshan brgyad*) which bear unmistakable sim-

[12] Many easily accessible texts of very a diverse nature attest to the exceptional place of Padmasambhava in Tibetan religious life. Among them, let us cite:

— the treasure-texts (*gter ma*) discovered over the centuries, including the *Bla ma gsang 'dus* of Guru Chos dbang (1210–1270), the *Gsol 'debs le'u bdun ma* (T.S. 12: 93–139) discovered by Rig 'dzin chen po Dngos grub rgyal mtshan, alias Rig 'dzin rgod ldem can (1307–1409), and not forgetting the *gter ma* of the *Bla ma nor bu rgya mtsho* of Padma gling pa (1450–1521).

– the *Bka' thang* series (biographies of Padmasambhava): *Bka' thang zangs gling ma* by Nyang ral nyi ma 'od zer (1136–1204); *Bka' thang lde lnga and Padma bka' thang* discovered by O rgyan gling pa (1323–? 1360).

– the repeated visions of the 5th Dalai Lama (Karmay 1988).

– the commentaries written by great masters like Mchog 'gyur gling pa (1829–1870) with *O rgyan rnam thar dpag bsam ljon shing* (short title: *O rgyan rnam thar*) or more recently the 8th Khams sprul Don rgyud nyi ma (1930–1981) with *O rgyan sangs rgyas gnyis pa'i sgrub mchod dus rim spros bcas tshes bcu'i lo rgyus mdor bsdus dad pa'i sa bon* (short title: *Tshes bcu'i lo rgyus*).

– the visions of 'Jams dbyangs mkhyen brtse dbang po (Ricard 1999: 42–44).

– and the numerous prayers (*gsol 'debs*) included in the *chos spyod* used at Zhe chen (T.S. 12):

* The famous "Seven chapter prayer" *Slob dpon sangs rgyas gnyis pa'i gsol 'debs le'u bdun ma* pp. 93–139 which includes the *Bsam pa lhun grub ma* pp. 126–132 and the *Gsol 'debs bar chad lam sel*: pp. 132–39.

* *Tshes bcu'i gsol 'debs*: pp. 141–48.

* The "Seven line prayer" *Gu ru'i tshig bdun gsol 'debs*: p. 149.

* *Tshig bdun bla sgrub byin rlabs char 'bebs*: pp. 151–57.

* *Rje 'bangs nyer lnga'i gsol 'debs*: pp. 184–88.

* *Zangs mdog dpal ri'i smon lam*: pp. 290–99.

* *Guru Chos dbang gi zab gter las shis brjod*: pp. 348–54.

To the abundance of written sources we can add the wealth of iconographic representations based on the visions of the great masters, visions in which Padmasambhava was the subject: he can appear alone, or surrounded by his two wives, or even with his eight principal manifestations, the *Guru mtshan brgyad* (cf. the great appliqué *thang kha* of Bhutan). In one of the most common representations he sits enthroned in majesty in his paradise of Zangs mdog dpal ri.

ilarities in all the ceremonies: at Hemis in Ladakh in 1976[13] (*bka' rgyud* tradition); Dbang 'dus pho brang in Bhutan in 1985 (*bka' rgyud* tradition); Bylakuppe in India in 1987 (the *rnying ma* tradition of Dpal yul monastery); Tashijong in India in 1987 (the *bka' rgyud* tradition of Khams pa gar); and especially the Nepali Zhe chen in 1991, 1992 and 2001, where the celebration—marked by a three-day *sgrub mchod* and magnified by the succession of dances that bring it to a close in a grand finale—takes place from the 8th to the 10th day of the 2nd month. Mention must be made of the change from the traditional date made necessary, according to my informants, by climatic conditions. The computer version of the Zhe chen liturgical calendar stipulated that the ritual of the *Bla ma gsang 'dus* with the *sprel zla'i tshes bcu chen mo'i spros bcas gar 'cham* dances be performed from the 3rd to the 10th day of the 5th month, which is consistent with the *dkar chag* of Smin grol gling (T.S. 9: 194–201).

The final reason is that I had at my disposal all the texts used during the *tshes bcu* celebrated at Zhe chen: *las byang, dbyangs yig, 'cham yig lag len*. These texts all relate to Padmasambhava: the text of the ritual properly known as *las byang* (T.S. 1) appears in the complete works of Guru Chos dbang. He includes a tribute of the *ḍākinī* to each of the eight principal manifestations of Padmasambhava (T.S. 1: 487), expressed in these terms:[14]

> Praise to the body of him who is "Born from the lotus", who is without attachment and who is not contaminated by faults!
> Praise to the body of him who is "Manifested on a lotus", who possesses all qualities at an eminent level!
> Praise to the body of "Blo ldan mchog sred"[15] for whom all the sciences are without obscurity!
> Praise to the body of "Lotus king" who brings under his power the three worlds [of desire (*'dod khams*); of form (*gzugs khams*) and the formless

13 Cf. Helffer (1980).

14 *Hrih ! ma chags skyon gyis ma gos pa'i / Padma 'byung nas sku la bstod / yon tan thams cad rab rdzogs pa'i / Padma sambha'i sku la bstod / shes bya kun la ma rmongs pa'i / Blo ldan mchog sred sku la bstod / khams gsum srid gsum dbang du sdud / Padma rgyal po sku la bstod / rmongs pa'i mun sel 'gro ba 'dul / Nyi ma 'od zer sku la bstod / log 'dren bdud bzhi 'dul mdzad pa'i / Shākya seng ge'i sku la bstod / mu stegs dam sri 'dul mdzad pa'i / Sengge sgra sgrogs sku la bstod / dregs pa'i dgra bgegs tshar gcod pa'i / Rdo rje gro lod sku la bstod /*

15 Western authors do not agree on the translation of Blo ldan mchog sred. "Scholar, lover of intelligence" for Cornu (1997: 238); "Vast intelligence" for Dilgo Khyentse (1991: 104) and "Intelligent Boon-seeker" for Dorje and Kapstein 1991: 417).

(*gzugs med khams*) and the three realms of the gods (*lha*); of men (*mi*) and of the water-spirits (*klu*)]
Praise to the body of 'Sunbeam' who turns towards beings in order to dispel obscurities.
Praise to the body of the 'Lion of the Śākya' who subjugates the four demons who mislead.
Praise to the body of 'Roaring lion' who subjugates heretics and breakers of *samaya* vows.
Praise to the body of Rdo rje gro lod[16] who cuts to the root the arrogance of the hostile demons.

Let us again cite the three manuals relating to chanting and instrumental music, dance and the general unfolding of the ritual, according to the tradition common to Smin grol gling and Zhe chen:

The *dbyangs yig* (T.S. 2: 203–64) for the *Bla ma gsang 'dus* entitled "Great divine drum" (*Bla ma gsang ba 'dus pa'i dbyangs yig srid zhi kun khyab lha yi rnga chen*).
The *'cham yig* (T.S. 3) for the expanded celebration of the big *tshes bcu: Spros bcas tshes bcu chen mo'i 'cham yig*.
The *lag len* (T.S. 4. vol. I: 141–92) for the celebration of the great *tshes bcu* of the *Bla ma gsang 'dus pa'i sgo nas spros bcas tshes bcu'i chen mo'i lag len*.

To these three works must be added the texts related to the propitiation of the nine great 'oath-bound' protectors of the religion (*dam can chos skyong*)—namely, four forms of Mahākāla (Legs ldan, Phyag bzhi pa, Ma ning, Zhal bzhi pa), two forms of Devī (Sngags srung ma, 'the guardian of the mantras' and Dur khrod ma mo, 'the grandmother of cemeteries'), as well as Lha chen, Gza' bdud and Rnam thos sras—and their acolytes (*rjes 'brang*), largely used in the various *sgrub chen* and *sgrub mchod* at Zhe chen, as in other monasteries of the *rnying ma* tradition (Kohn 2001: 35–47, 269–73 and 275.

III. The *tshes bcu* at the Nepali Zhe chen

It is important to underline first of all that the re-establishment of the *tshes bcu* at the Nepali Zhe chen was not immediate and required long preparations, including the making of one hundred masks by Bhutanese

[16] "Adamantine free being" for Toussaint (1979: 182); "Adamantine potbellied master" for Dilgo Khyentse (1991: 105); "Diamond with an enormous belly" for Cornu (1997: 39).

artists and many costumes by an elderly monk at the monastery itself (Ricard 1999: 61).

The following description of the sequence of events is based on observations made *in situ* and on the text of the *lag len*:

> The preparations begin during the last days of the 1st month of the Tibetan calendar with the making of a profusion of ritual cakes (*gtor ma*).
> The 2nd day of the 2nd month: the monks prepare the *maṇḍala* of the *Bla ma gsang 'dus* (T.S. 4: 144–45) while placing to the north the triangular receptacle (*'brub khung*) (p. 146) in which the effigy of the *liṅga* will be inserted.
> The 3rd day: the monks are convened in the assembly hall (*'du khang*) by the disciplinarian (*dge skos*), and there they recite several prayers, including:
> – the "Seven verse prayer" (*Tshig bdun gsol 'debs*),[17]
> – the "Seven chapter prayer" (*Gsol 'debs le'u bdun ma*) in which the musical notation appears (T.S. 2: 485–508),[18]
> – the *bskang gso* of the nine protectors of the rnying ma pa tradition [according to the *Smin gling dngos rol* (T.S. 2: 267–425)].
> From the 4th to the 8th day: the text (*lag len*) does not give detailed information (T.S. 4: 162–70).
> 9th day (T.S. 4: 171): the celebration of the ritual is followed by the repetition of certain dances outside and presided over by Rabjam Rinpoche, who then selects the dancers who are to perform the next day.

Inside, the monks prepare costumes, masks and other accessories, arranged along the east wall of the assembly hall, the entry of which is concealed by a curtain and which serves, for the occasion, as a cloakroom.

During this time, the final preparations take place in the courtyard of the monastery: putting up the musicians' tent; marking the ground with white lines to provide the markers for the dancers' movements,

---

[17] See Khyentse Rinpoche (1991: 130–31) for a translation and (T.S. 12: 149).

[18] *Gter ma* discovered by Rig 'dzin Rgod ldem can (1337–1409), divided, as its title indicates, into seven parts: 1. The supplication to the king Khri Srong lde btsan. 2. The supplication to Ye shes mtsho rgyal. 3. The supplication to Nam mkha' snying po. 4. The supplication to Na nam rdo rje bdud 'joms [contains the list of the *Guru mtshan brgyad* as well as some other manifestations]. 5. The supplication to the prince Mu khri btsan po [treasure discovered in 1362 by sprul sku Bzang po grags pa]. 6. The supplication for the spontaneous fulfilment of all desires (*Bsam pa lhun grub ma*). 7. The supplication for dispelling the obstacles (*bar chad lam sel*) [in which each stanza ends with the utterance of the twelve syllable mantra of Padmasambhava *oṃ aḥ hūṃ badzra guru padma siddhi hūṃ*].

and indicating the place where the eight manifestations of Padmasambhava (*Guru mtshan brgyad*) will settle down. Offerings and praise are offered to the protectors while the monks perform the dances in simple monastic clothing (*dmar 'cham*, 'red *'cham*', so called for the colour of their dancers' dress) (Ricard 1999: 92–95).

Very early in the morning of the 10th day (T.S. 4: 174ff), the same ritual as on the two previous days begins. A pause allows all the monks to prepare the spectacle that is to follow: the performance of the dances that constitute the climax of the *tshes bcu* and which, in April 2001, was outlined in a programme in English, written for the benefit of the Western public, in which the sequence of dances was explained as follows:

> 1. *Tsam chod*: Establishing the Boundaries. The place is visualised as a perfect buddhafield and all the participants as male and female deities.
> 2. *Chin beb*: Invoking the Rain of Blessings.
> 3. Pacham: Dance of the Celestial Heroes according to a vision of Pema Lingpa.
> 4. *Serkhyem*: Offering of the Golden Libation to dispel outer and inner obstacles.
> 5. *Tun ngam*: The Great Fierce Ones.
> 6. *Tsok len*: An effigy symbolising the attachment to the ego is cut by the sword of wisdom.
> 7. *Ging chen chutruk*: The sixteen Great Heroic Beings; the various phases of this dance symbolise the movements of subtle spiritual energies within the body.
> 8. *Guru tsengyed*: Arrival in grand procession of Guru Rinpoche and His Eight Manifestations. They are preceded by the gods Indra and Brahmā and escorted by the Dharma King Trisong Deutsen, the Great Khempo Bodhisattva, and the Queen Yeshey Tsogyal.
> 9. *Khandro de nga*: A Song of Request by the Five Dakinis. Each of the manifestations dances in turn. The last two Guru Senge Dradok and Dorje Drolo, produce a "re-emanation" who dance with them and then are symbolising the extension of Guru Rinpoche's teachings.

This terse programme, the titles of which are given in approximate phonetic transcription, calls for a bit of explanation based on consultation of the texts and repeated observation of the dances.

The entrance of the dancers into the courtyard is preceded by the chanting of the omnipresent 'Seven verse prayer' (*Tshig bdun gsol 'debs*), the shortest invocation, delivered by the *dbu mdzad* accompanying himself with cymbals. He is joined by the musicians—players of the *rnga* drum and the *dung chen* trumpets—who sit around him, under

the small tent erected in the courtyard. According to the teachings by Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche (1991: 81), "this prayer was chanted by the *dâkinis* to invite Padmasambhava to manifest himself from the *dharmadhatu*, the absolute space, and to come to this world to help the beings. This prayer is found in all the *sadhanas* of Padmasambhava. He himself had hidden it in numerous *terma* or spiritual treasures, for the good of future generations".[19]

The end of the prayer is followed by a series of dances that will take up a good part of the day and which constitutes, in the words of Matthieu Ricard in his presentations, a "danced vision", a real "teaching in pictures".

The analysis of the various manuals, supplemented by my own observations of the ritual partly filmed under the direction of Jean-Pierre Devorsine, shows that the succession of dances performed in 2001 is identical to that given in the *dkar chag* of Smin grol gling (T.S. 9: 193–201) and in the *'cham yig* of Khams pa sgar (T.S. 5), as well as in the observations made by Combe at Rdo rje brag in 1924 (Combe 1975: 179–93).

Each dance is announced by the sound of the *rgya gling* oboe or the *dung chen* trumpets, placed at the top of the steps, at the entrance of the assembly hall where the dancers prepare themselves:

> *mtshams gcod,* 'establishing the boundaries', is executed by sixteen dancers wearing 'wrathful masks' (*khro 'bag)*, and who hold a ritual dagger (*phur pa*) in the right hand and the *bhanda* cup in the left.
> *byin 'bebs*, 'rain of blessings': sixteen *ḍākinī*, with the *ḍāmaru* drum in the right hand and the *dril bu* bell in the left, have their faces partly concealed by 'copper masks' (*zangs 'bag*).
> *gser skyems*, 'golden libation': the twenty-one 'Black Hats' (*zhwa nag*) do not wear masks. The role of the first among them is generally taken by a *sprul sku* of the monastery: Rabjam Rinpoche himself in 1991 and the young reincarnation (*yang srid*) of Khyentse Rinpoche, aged eleven years, in 2008.
> *gtum rngam*, 'the fierce ones', wear 'wrathful masks' (*khro 'bag*) and brandish a sword in the right hand. Their leader carries out the execution of the *liṅga*.

After a break for lunch, eight *pho ging*[20] and eight *mo ging*, male and female musicians—each with a *rnga* double-headed frame drum—per-

[19] There are many commentaries, one of which is the *Guru tshig bdun gsol 'debs kyi rnam bshad padma dkar po* due to Ju Mi pham (1846–1912).

[20] See Helffer (1994: 26).

form an acrobatic dance of multiple figures. They are violently attacked by twenty-one *tshogs len* (literally 'those who take the *tshogs*' [to which they do not have the right]), each wearing a sort of red helmet surmounted by a scorpion (*mdze 'bag*), and holding in his hands a *phur pa* and a *bhanda* (Ricard 1999: 91). After a tumultuous confrontation, the battle ends with the victory of the *ging*.

They are followed by the 'heroes' (*dpa' bo*)[21] of the paradise of Padmasambhava, who carry the *ḍāmaru* drum and the *dril bu* bell, and who execute a spectacular *dpa' 'cham*, in accordance with the vision of Padma gling pa (15th century). This dance of the 'heroes', which is not mentioned in the *dkar chag* of Smin grol gling, is borrowed from the Bhutanese tradition. It was to be removed in 2001, then reintroduced subsequently (Ricard 1999: 100–101).

It is then, from inside the temple, that one by one, the members of an imposing procession (*ser sbreng*) suddenly appear. The procession is formed by the whole of the monastery's monk body—including the youngest – in grand costumes and yellow hats, carrying offerings, banners, musical instruments, etc. Then come Hwa shang and his children, the Hwa phrug, who precede the arrival of Guru Rinpoche himself, his two wives Mandāravā and Ye shes mtsho rgyal, the king Khri Srong lde btsan and the abbot Śāntarakṣita, and the eight manifestations of Padmasambhava (*Guru mtshan brgyad*). The monks who represent them settle down in the middle of the courtyard, in a single row facing south, on either side of a Guru Rinpoche of great size, according to the following arrangement:

7	5	3	1	Guru Rinpoche	2	4	6	8

1. Mtsho skyes rdo rje, in a blue mask holding *rdo rje* and *dril bu*;
2. Padmasambha, in *paṇḍit* costume with a cup in his right hand;
3. Blo ldan mchog sred, in royal costume, with a crown of jewels and holding a *ḍāmaru* and a cup;
4. Padma rgyal po, in royal costume with a *ḍāmaru* and a mirror;
5. Nyi ma 'od zer, as an ascetic with a crown made up of five skulls and holding a *khaṭvānga*[22] and sun;

[21] See Helffer (1994: 26).

[22] A *khaṭvānga* is a "magic sceptre ... particular to Buddhist tantrism. It consists of a wooden shaft bearing, superposed or combined downward from the top: a vajra, three human heads of different stages of decomposition... a golden jar, a *viśvavajra* [a four-branch vajra] and an unfurled banner decorated with small bells. The *khaṭvānga* is

6. Śākya Seng ge, one of the aspects of the Buddha Śākyamuni with an alms bowl;
7. Seng ge sgra sgrogs, of blue colour with a crown made up of five skulls and holding a *rdo rje*;
8. Rdo rje gro lod, of dark brown colour with curly hair and holding *rdo rje* and *phur pa*.

In front of them the two wives of Guru Rinpoche take their place: to the right Ye shes mtsho rgyal and to the left Mandāravā. The gods Indra and Brahmā, who hold musical instruments, each performs a dance of homage to Guru Rinpoche; then the 'five categories of *ḍākinī*' (*mkha' 'gro sde lnga*), without masks and played by very young monks, come to stand facing the imposing row formed by Guru Rinpoche and his eight manifestations (Ricard 1999: 27, 72–73). To a flute accompaniment they pay homage to the 'three doors' (*sgo gsum*)—body, speech and mind—of the Guru in these terms:

Rje btsun bla ma'i sku la phyag 'tshal bstod	Prostrations and praise to the body of theVenerable Master
Rje btsun bla ma'i gsung la phyag 'tshal bstod	Prostrations and praise to the speech of the Venerable Master
Rje btsun bla ma'i thugs la phyag 'tshal bstod	Prostrations and praise to the mind of the Venerable Master
Rje btsun bla ma'i sku gsung thugs la bstod	Prostrations and praise to his body, his speech, his mind

Finally, each of the eight manifestations then executes a dance of homage to Guru Rinpoche in the order indicated above.

The celebration ends with the processional return of all the participants to the assembly hall where the concluding prayers of the ritual take place, along with the inconspicuous obliteration of the *maṇḍala*, before the scattering of the powder in the river.

attributed to most of the wrathful deities, in particular to those of the Hevajra cycle". M.T. de Mallman (1975: 17).

IV. From the liturgical celebration to the dance spectacle

It was in 1995 that the first tour of a group of Zhe chen monks to the West was organised. The justification for this decision is worth examining.

The trip had been prepared for a long time by Rabjam Rinpoche, abbot of the monastery, with the help of François Picard.[23] The latter went to the monastery to finalise the duration of the spectacle, the choice of dances, the cuts that would need to be made, and the artistic quality required for such a performance.

The desire expressed by the monastic authorities was to present a series of scenes which could give the Western public an idea of what a *'cham* is and to share this aspect of their culture. It was therefore necessary to reformulate it to suit a Western audience and to take into account the constraints of a performance: the spatial organisation of a normal Western stage meant a frontal presentation for the dancers, unlike the movements in the courtyard of the monastery. Moreover, for evident economic reasons the number of dancers and musicians anticipated could not be more than twenty, including the irreducible presence of four musicians (chant master playing the *rol mo* cymbals, *rnga* drum players, *rkang gling* players and *dung chen* trumpets players). To give just one example, the number of 'Black Hats' (*zhwa nag*) participating in the *gser skyems* dance had to be reduced to four, instead of the twenty-one who participate at the celebration *in situ*. Moreover, the duration of a spectacle—not more than about one hour and fifteen minutes – shaped the choice of episodes to retain and the cuts to make in each of the selected dances.

The first programme, presented in 1995 when the tour came to France, Belgium and Switzerland was entitled *Danses sacrées du Tibet: monastère de Shétchen* (Sacred dances of Tibet: Shetchen monastery). It was limited to seven dances of which five[24] belonged to the celebration of the *tshes bcu* as described above: **gser skyems / dur bdag / sha ba / *tshogs len / *ging / *byin 'bebs / *dpa' 'cham.*[25]

---

[23] He is now professor of ethnomusicology at the UFR de musique et musicologie (department of music and musicology) at the Université de Paris IV-Sorbonne.

[24] These five dances are indicated here by an asterisk (*).

[25] The two particularly spectacular dances, the 'masters of the cemeteries' (*dur bdag*) and the 'stag' (*sha ba*), do not belong to the *tshes bcu* cycle; they are part of the Bhutanese repertoire and are particularly appreciated by young monks of Bhutanese origin.

As indicated by the thick press folder that was given to me, the same programme was maintained for the European tour (France, Switzerland, Portugal, Belgium) of 1997.

In 1999, the programme *Danses et musiques sacrées du Tibet* (Sacred dances and music of Tibet), produced at the Forum des Halles in Paris, comprised the same seven scenes,* executed in slightly different order, with **gser skyems / dur bdag / sha ba / *byin 'bebs / *dpa' 'cham / *tshogs len / *ging*. This performance was held in a combined event lasting more than a week and named "Regards sur le Tibet: Carte blanche à Matthieu Ricard" (Views of Tibet: *Carte blanche* to Matthieu Ricard), for which the companion volume *Moines danseurs du Tibet* (Monk dancers of Tibet), illustrated with magnificent photographs, had just been published. The author devoted a chapter (1999: 88–101) to the festival of the 10th day and gave explanations on the 'Black Hats' (*zhwa nag*); 'copper masks' (*zangs 'bag*); the 'Seven verse prayer'; *gtum rngam*, *tshogs len* and *ging*; the interventions of the atsara clowns; the sixteen heroes (*dpa' bo*) according to the vision of Padma gling pa; and finally, the *Guru mtshan brgyad* (*ibid.*: 104–18). This event also included the presentation of films and photographs.

In 2000, on the occasion of the Turin 'Settembre Musica', for the first time outside the monastery the programme was centred on the eight manifestations of Padmasambhava. Four other dances followed this performance: that of the four *dur bdag*; the **dpa' bo*; the **tshogs len*; and the **ging*, already presented in previous tours. On this occasion a small book entitled *Musiche dal tetto del mondo* was published under my direction, with the intention of offering a panorama of different aspects of the music played in the Tibetan cultural world.

From this date, various spectacles were organised under the leadership of a new tour manager in the person of Jean-Pierre Devorsine.

In 2001, a week–long event was organised at the time of the Tibetan new year (*lo gsar*) at the Cartoucherie de Vincennes/Théâtre du Soleil of Ariane Mnouchkine. It was entitled Moines danseurs du Tibet: Monastère de Shechen (Monk dancers of Tibet: Shechen monastery). The spectacle included the following dances: **gser skyems*; *dur bdag* (with two dancers); *sha ba*; **rdo rje gro lod*; **byin 'bebs* (four dancers); **dpa' 'cham* (six dancers); **tshogs len* (six dancers); **ging* (six dancers).

Simultaneously, in the same location there were meetings with Matthieu Ricard, Tibetologists and historians from French and foreign

universities, and even Chinese dissidents on the theme "Do we have to dance with China?" All of this slightly preceded the celebration of the *tshes bcu* at Bodnath during which Jean-Pierre Devorsine made a film and recorded a long interview with Rabjam Rinpoche.

The following year, in 2002, after the visit of the Zhe chen monks at Ariane Mnouchkine's theatre, Nathalie Gauthard made a DVD with a specially developed study of the choreography of the *gser skyems* and of the *dpa' 'cham*. Then, in 2004, the festival of sacred arts took place at Fez with the dancers of Zhe chen.

A few words may be said about the results of this wide exposure. All the performances were selective presentations of the dances performed *in situ* at the monastery, while favouring the most spectacular dances. A few of the dances performed during the *tshes bcu* are staged, but they are no longer the prelude to the majestic appearance of Guru Rinpoche and the *Guru mtshan brgyad*, and the somewhat disjointed character of the presentation results in the loss of the pedagogical element conveyed by the traditional setting.

The presentation of the *'cham* on Western stages has led to intensive training of the monks and to notable progress in their technical execution. This certainly constitutes a benefit for the celebration of the rituals, but above all, the profits derived from the tours provide the three-hundred-odd monks of the monastery with food, which is not at all insignificant.

For the spectators, the international exposure—from isolated shows in Europe to participation in festivals of music or dance in countries like Brazil (the São Paulo Festival of Theatrical Arts) and Morocco (the Festival of Sacred Arts in Fez)—unquestionably constitutes a cultural enrichment. However, the significance of such an event is largely lost on them, inasmuch as the stage performances completely detach the dances from their religious base.

Conclusion

The will displayed by the monastic authorities, in the person of Khyentse Rinpoche and then Rabjam Rinpoche, to maintain the Smin grol gling tradition as transmitted to the mother monastery of Zhe chen has, till now, been faithfully observed at the Nepali Zhe chen, which today has about three hundred monks (of which a good proportion are novices).

To my knowledge, the liturgical celebration of the *tshes bcu* inside the monastery is not experiencing any notable change: it relies, as we have seen, on the *gter ma* of Guru Chos dbang, which is regarded as authoritative and which has been the subject of many commentaries and teachings for centuries. The situation is the same for other *tshes bcu* celebrated in the Tibetan world, both among the Bka' brgyud pa (Kham pa sgar in India, or Rumtek in Sikkim) and the Rnying ma pa, as already shown by the film *Le message des Tibétains* (The message of the Tibetans) by Arnaud Desjardins, made in 1964 at Mtsho Padma (with Dudjom Rinpoche as the principal officiant), and confirmed by my personal observations in 1987 at Dpal yul monastery in exile in Bylakuppe.

Moreover, the careful new editions of the manuals developed at Zhe chen, intended for the various branches of the monastery and supplemented by the instructions of chant or dance masters trained before the Chinese occupation, have allowed a revival of the rituals in the exile setting in conditions that are now actually better than in the old mother monastery, because of the long interruption religious practice has experienced. As a result, in spite of the relocation, it is now the Nepali Zhe chen—where both Rabjam Rinpoche and the reincarnation of Khyentse Rinpoche reside – which acts as mother monastery, the place where young monks wishing to have access to the traditions of Zhe chen come to train.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the political changes that have taken place in Tibet and Nepal, and the massive exodus of Tibetans in exile, have already had immediate consequences for the life of religious communities.

In Tibet and in the regions of Tibetan population, the restrictions on religious life which have become excessively severe since the events of spring 2008 have raised fears for the religious future of Tibetans. This limitation of religious activities raises the spectre of monasteries being reduced in the near future to a sort of museum, where only 'folklorised' performances will be organised for the pleasure of tourists, mainly Chinese.

In Nepal, despite the place taken by Tibetans in the economic life of the country and the increase in the number of monasteries being founded, the new policies of the government constitutes an enormous brake on the arrival of new Tibetan refugees.

As we have seen, Zhe chen monastery maintains a close connection with the mother monastery in Tibet and also with that of Smin sgrol gling. However, there has been a strong Bhutanese influence since the beginning, because of the patronage of the royal family of Bhutan. There is a likelihood that the success of the performances organised abroad, the increasingly frequent involvement of local television, and the presence of a number of professional and amateur photographers in the sacred area—as a film made by N. Gauthard in 2008 shows—will bring about a semi-secularisation of at least some of the the *'cham* dances. This is already the case in Bhutan, where the Royal Academy of Performing Arts teaches a great number of dances now performed by lay professionals, even if they are held in the celebration of the *tshes bcu*. Bhutanese dancers appeared in France as early as 1979–80 at the Maison de la culture de Rennes (Rennes Cultural Centre), in a spectacle that created a sensation, *Danses et Musiques sacrées du Royaume du Bhutan* (Sacred Dances and Music of the Kingdom of Bhutan). They returned in 1991, appearing at the Festival d'automne (Autumn Festival) in Paris. Further, Nag phel, a lay *'cham dpon*, made an inventory of the dances performed in the Kingdom. His work was later popularised in booklets in English meant for tourists and written by Françoise Pommaret (alias Bkra shis dbang mo). More recently, in 2001, another lay *'cham dpon*, Dasho Sithel, brought out a descriptive booklet (with colour photographs) of twenty-five of these dances. Moreover, a much more ambitious project is under way, initiated in 2003 by the Honolulu Academy of Arts, consisting of the video recording of masked dances of Bhutan. In 2006, eleven *tshes bcu* were recorded, amounting to three hundred and fifty hours of recording! This active promotion has no doubt favoured the inclusion of the very spectacular *Dramitse ngacham*—produced at the Cité de la musique of Paris (City of Music) in October—among the "masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity" of UNESCO. More modestly, the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts of Dharamsala has included in its programmes one or another of the dances performed at the time of the monastic *'cham*.

In all these events, the intimate relationship that united the ritual and the dance has gradually diminished, and the danced tradition which was part of the religious heritage of a given monastery has slipped progressively into the rank of local, national, even world cultural heritage. In these circumstances, what is left of the religious content that, for the

faithful Buddhist, made attendance at a *'cham* an aspect of 'liberation on seeing' (*mthong sgrol*)?

At a time of inescapable globalisation, one can only wonder about the directions that are going to be taken by the monastic authorities. We know that the plan to construct peace *stūpas* at each of the eight holy places of Buddhism in India (*gnas chen po brgyad*), initiated by Khyentse Rinpoche, is already being carried out. Furthermore, there has been a considerable development of humanitarian and charitable activity through the Karuna Association.[26]

What will be the choices made by the reincarnation of Khyentse Rinpoche, who for the first time in 2008, took part in the *tshes bcu* dances? Will he have his say, or will all the decisions depend on Rabjam Rinpoche, master at his monastery? What is going to be the attitude of the new Western Buddhist, more interested in meditative practice than in the preservation of the solemnity of the rituals? What should we think of the initiative taken by Lama Tharchin at his centre of Corralitos in California for promoting the performance of a dance of the eight manifestations of Guru Rinpoche (Kohn 2001: 314, n. 43)? And finally, what will be the choices of the new *sbyin bdag*, grant providers, who- and whatever they may be: individuals or institutions, local or international organisations, UNESCO, even organisers of spectacles or tour operators? All these questions will only find answers in the near or slightly distant future.

Bibliography

Tibetan sources

T.S. 1: *Gsang 'dus bla ma'i snying po rab gsal, extract from the Gter mdzod chos dbang Bla ma gsang 'dus*, [Text of the ritual of the *tshes bcu*; short title: *las byang*]: 461–498.

T.S. 2: *Bla ma gsang 'dus pa'i dbyangs yig srid zhi kun khyab lha yi rnga chen, in Dpal rgyal ba zhe chen pa'i lugs kyi dbyangs yig skor*. A Collection of Musical Notations for the Rituals Performed at the Nyingma Monastery of Shechen Tennyi Dargyeling. Shechen Publications, 203–64.

T.S. 3: *Spros bcas tshes bcu chen mo'i 'cham yig blo gsal dga' ba'i dpal*. Computer copy (in dbu can) arranged at Bodnath according to the manuscript version (in dbu med) of a *'cham yig* for the celebration of the *tshes bcu*, communicated in 2001, 24–32.

[26] www.karuna-shechen.org

T.S. 4: (2001) *Bla ma gsang 'dus pa'i sgo nas spros bcas tshes bcu chen mo'i lag len dngos grub char 'bebs in zhe chen lugs srol cho ga'i lag len skor*. A set of unique manuals for the rituals in use at Shechen Tennyi Dargyeling monasteries, in accordance with the Mindroling tradition of the Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism, Shechen Publications, vol. I, 141–92.

T.S. 5: *Khams pa sgar zhes yongs grags smad 'brug chos sde chen po ma lag dang bcas pa'i ring lugs gsar rnying gar 'cham skor gyi rtsa tshig dang rol mo'i chings kyi reg gzigs glegs bam phyogs sgril, short title: Khams sgar gsar rnying gar'cham rtsa tshig: tshes bcu dang mgon po sgrub chen gyi 'cham yig*. The collected instructions on the performance of the sacred dance with accompanying cymbal percussion notations as performed in the Khams pa sgar monasteries in eastern Tibet, containing the *tshes bcu* and *mgon po sgrub chen* dances by Rong dge chos dbyings, a contemporary of the [6th] Khams sprul Bstan pa'i nyi ma [1848–1907], 563 pp.

T.S. 5a: 8th Khams sprul Don rgyud nyi ma (1962) *O rgyan sangs rgyas gnyis pa'o sgrib mchod dus rim spros bcas tshes bcu'i lo rgyus mdor bsdus dad pa'i sa bon*, Kalimpong. *Idem* under the short title *tshes bcu'i lo rgyus* in T.S. 5, 531–63.

T.S. 6: (1982) *Gsang 'dus bla ma'i sgrub thabs kyi las mtha' rdo rje'i gar 'cham kyi yi ge*. A manual for the performance of the sacred dance and chant in connection with the *sgrub chen* of the *Bla ma gsang 'dus* from the revelations of Guru Chos dbang [1212–1280], according the practice of the Karmapa tradition. New Delhi, [from the manuscripts belonging to the *dbu mdzad* of Rumtek Monastery], 57 pp.

T.S. 7: (1982) *Gter chen mi 'gyur rdo rje'i zab gter rdo rje gro lod las byang bca' thabs 'don sgrigs 'then grangs da dril rgya dung dkar dmar phyag len bcas pa*. A manual for the liturgical performance of the *sgrub chen* of Guru Rinpoche in the form of Rdo rje gro lod from the revelations of Yongs dge Mi 'gyur rdo rje [1643–?1667]. Reproduced from the manuscript used by the *dbu mdzad* of Rumtek Monastery; published by Karmapa Chodey, Rumtek (Sikkim), 65 p.

T.S. 8: (1976) *Dpal spungs dbyangs yig skor. A collection of chanting and instrumental notations for the various rites performed at the great karma bka' brgyud pa monastery dpal spungs, and its various affiliates in Khams*. Published by Sherap Gyaltsen Lama, Gangtok. [This text brings together seventeen *dbyangs yig* from the Kham monastery and in particular the one meant to accompany the rites derived from the *bla ma gsang 'dus* by Guru Chos dbang, 401–43.]

T.S. 9: (1992) *O rgyan smin grol gling dkar chag,* Krung go'i bod kyi shes rig dpe skrun khang. [Concerning the celebration of the *tshes bcu*, see pp. 193–201.]

T.S. 10: Mchog gyur gling pa, *alias* Mchog gling, *O rgyan rnam thar dpag bsam ljon shing,* Xylograph 31 fol. [Given by Bdud 'joms Rinpoche in 1973], short title: *O rgyan rnam thar*, [extract from the cycle of the *Zab pa skor bdun*].

T.S. 11: *Smin gling lo chen ngag dbang chos dpal rgya mtsho'i gsung 'bum: The collected works of Smin gling Lo chen Dharma śrī* (1654–1717), vol. PHA (vol. XIV of the Smin grol gling edition kept at the Collège de France under the reference BTT 459).

—— *Khrag 'thung khro bo'i 'cham kyi brjed byang kun bzang rnam par rtsen pa'i rol pa* [short title: *khrag 'thung khro 'cham*], 123–66.

—— *'Brub 'cham lag len*: 167–76.

—— *Mchod gar gyi brjed byang mchod sprin rnam par spro ba'i rol mo* [short title: *mchod sprin rnam rol*], 177–91.

T.S. 12: (1998) *Chos spyod kyi rim pa nye bar mkho ba*, Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies (Deemed University), Sarnath-Vanarasi (U.P.), India.

T.S. 13: Dpal sprul 'Jam dpal blo gros, (1965) *Bod na bzhugs pa'i rnying ma dgon deb.* [Record of Nyingma Monasteries in Tibet] Dalhousie, India.

T.S. 14: (1996) Bkra shis rgya mtsho *et al.*, *Gsang rnying rgyan dang rol mo'i bstan bcos*. Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang [Lhasa], [*Gangs can rig mdzod* 30].

T.S. 15: Gter bdag gling pa, *Bstan pa skyong ba'i dam can chen po rnams kyi phrin las dngos grub kyi rol mtsho*. Short title: *Smin gling dngos rol*. [The ceremonies for the greatest oath-bound protectors of the doctrine; text published and translated by Richard Kohn, in his Ph.D. obtained in 1988, entitled "The Playful Ocean of True Achievement", but of which only the translation features in Kohn 2001.]

T.S. 16: (1973) Rdo rje brag Rig 'dzin 7 Thub bstan chos dbang mnyam nyid rdo rje, *Rituals of rdo rje brag*, vol. 1: 493–509. "Notes on the *tshes bcu* rites celebrated at Rdo rje brag in commemoration of the life of Padmasambhava", Leh: Smanrtsis Shesrig Spenzod, vol. 65.

Western sources

Blondeau, A. M. 1994. Bya rung kha shor, légende fondatrice du bouddhisme tibétain. *In* P. Kvaerne (ed.), *Tibetan Studies*. Proceedings of the 6th Seminar of the IATS. Oslo: The Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture, vol. 1, 31–48.

Combe, G. A. 1975 [1926]. *A Tibetan on Tibet*, Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar, Bibliotheca Himalayica Series III/vol. 4.

Cornu, P. 1997. *Padmasambhava : la magie de l'éveil*. Paris: Le Seuil (Points Sagesse).

Cornu, P. 2001. *Dictionnaire encyclopédique du bouddhisme*. Paris: Le Seuil.

Dilgo Khyentsé Rinpoche, 1991. *Au seuil de l'Éveil*. Peyzac-le-Moustier: Éditions Padmakara.

Dorje, Gyurme and K. Kapstein, 1991. *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism: Its Fundamentals and History*, Vol. I, Boston: Wisdom Publications.

Helffer, M. 1980. The *'cham*[*s*] of Padmasambhava in the Monastery of Hemis. *The World of Music* 1/1980, 107–24.

—— 1994. Mchod rol. *Les instruments de la musique tibétaine*, Paris: CNRS Editions and Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme (With CD included).

—— 2004.Traditions musicales dans un monastère du bouddhisme tibétain. *L'Homme*, nos 171–72, *Musique et anthropologie*, 173–96.

Helffer, M. *et al.* 2000. *Musiche dal Tetto del Mondo*. Citta di Torino: Settembre Musica.

Karmay, S. G. 1988. *Le manuscrit d'or : visions secrètes du Vème Dalaï Lama*. Paris: Editions Findakly (Patrimoines d'Orient).

Kohn, R. J. 2001. *Lord of the Dance. The Mani Rimdu Festival in Tibet and Nepal*. New York: State University of New York Press (Suny Series in Buddhist Studies, Matthew Kapstein, editor).

Mallmann, M. T. 1975. *Introduction à l'iconographie du tantrisme bouddhique*. Paris: Bibliothèque du centre de recherches sur l'Asie centrale et la Haute-Asie, Vol. 1.

Nebesky-Wojkowitz de, R. 1976. *Tibetan Religious Dances*. Tibetan text and annotated translation of the 'cham yig. With an appendix by Walter Graf. The Hague: Mouton.

Orgyan Tobgyal 1982/1988: *The Life and Teaching of Chokgyur Lingpa*. (Trans. Tulku Jigmey and Erik Pema Kunsang.) Kathmandu: Rangjung Yeshe Publications.

Ricard, M. 1996. *L'esprit du Tibet: La vie et le monde de Dilgo Khyentse, maître spirituel*. Paris: Le Seuil. (With numerous photographs relating to the celebration of the *tshes bcu*).
—— 1999. *Moines danseurs du Tibet*. Paris: Albin Michel.
Smith, E. G. 2001. *Among Tibetan Texts: History and Literature of the Himalayan Plateau*. Boston: Wisdom Publications.
Toussaint, G.C. 1979. Le grand Guru Padmasambhava, histoire de ses existences. Paris: Editions orientales Michel Allard. (First published 1953 as *Le dict de Padma*.)

LOW TRICKS AND HIGH STAKES SURROUNDING A HOLY PLACE IN EASTERN NEPAL: THE HALESI-MĀRATIKA CAVES[1]

KATIA BUFFETRILLE
ÉCOLE PRATIQUE DES HAUTES ÉTUDES
CENTRE DE RECHERCHE SUR LES CIVILISATIONS DE L'ASIE ORIENTALE

> Exoterically, it is a place where Dbang phyug (Śiva) and Umā[devī] take pleasure. Esoterically, it is the grand palace of 'Khor lo sdom pa (Cakrasaṃvara). Secretly, it is the palace of the deities of immortality and, in an even more secret way, it is the paradise of the great bliss of the realm of the absolute 'Og min (Akaniṣṭha).[2]

It is in these terms that Bya bral Rinpoche describes the caves of Halesi-Māratika, a holy place in eastern Nepal claimed by several communities, Indo-Nepalese, Sherpa, Tibetan exiles and Rai, and which has experienced tremendous changes over the last fifteen years.

Based on several fieldtrips made in 1992, 1994, 1995, then in 2006 and 2007, the study of this holy site has already been the subject of two publications (Buffetrille 1994a and 1994b). One presented the Hindu and Buddhist perspectives on the caves, while the other revealed the struggle between these two communities for the takeover of the site and described the process of Buddhicisation modelled on the scenario of the subjugation of Śiva, as related in the written sources.

The present article is conceived as a follow-up, clarifying and completing the information. It highlights developments at Halesi-Māratika over the last fifteen years and presents the protagonists as well as their various activities.

The first part aims at putting the history of the caves into perspective according to new information obtained. The two following parts

[1] I thank all the inhabitants of Halesi and my friend and assistant Kami Sherpa without whose help this work would have never been possible. I would also like to express my gratitude to M. Akester, M.D. Even, D. Masset and C. Ramble for their remarks and comments. The fieldtrips of 2006 and 2007 would not have been possible without the financial support of the Centre de Recherche sur les Civilisations de l'Asie Orientale (UMR 8155).

[2] Bya bral Rinpoche, cf. Buffetrille (2000: 335).

are devoted to two processes that are having a significant impact on the ritual life of this holy place: Buddhicisation, which is still ongoing and assertive despite the establishment of Maoism, and the wish for international recognition.

I. HALESI-MĀRATIKA

The two caves of Halesi-Māratika are located in the lower and upper part of the Avalokiteśvara hill in eastern Nepal, in the Mahabarat range, south-east of the town of Okhaldhunga (Khotang district). They are revered by both Hindus for whom Śiva is manifested there in the form of a *liṅga*, and also Buddhists (basically Sherpa and Tibetans) because Padmasambhava and Mandāravā are said to have obtained there the supreme mastery of immortality (*tshe la dbang ba'i rig 'dzin*), at the time of the Tibetan new year according to a local oral tradition.

This site is also very important for the Rai, a strongly Hindu indigenous community of which one group, the Chamling Rai, live in this region. In fact, all the traditions agree in saying that it was a Rai hunter, in pursuit of a deer, who discovered the caves.

The place attracts many Indo-Nepalis at the time of four important festivals: Śivarātri (February-March), Rām Navami (March-April), Tij (August-September) and Bālā Chaturdasi (November-December). Buddhists go there essentially for Tibetan new year, the date that for them marks the principal event that took place there.

1. *The various protagonists*

a. The Giri

The Hindu population of Halesi is made up of, among others, several Giri families. The Giri are one of the subdivisions of the Śaiva renouncers of Dasnāmi Sannyāsi, 'Sannyāsi of the ten names", an order founded in the 11th century by Śaṅkarācārya.[3] They form the "dominant caste" (Dumont 1966) and their role is very important.

[3] The Dasnāmi Sannyāsi are divided into ten orders in India but there are only seven in Nepal (Bouillier 1979: 9, 179; 1985: 199–229).

Following the discovery of the caves by the hunter Bagbansi Rai in the 18th century, a certain Manohar Giri was invited as priest (*pujari*). A copper plaque[4] (*tāma patra*), as well as various documents, confirms this. Originally from Ramechhap district, west of Okhaldhunga, he established himself at Halesi under the reign of Rana Bahadur Shah (1777–1799). In 1786, he received land as *guthi birta*[5] tenure according to the system of inheritance from disciple to disciple[6] (*śiṣya pa śiṣya*) in exchange for which he accepted the position of *mahant*,[7] the person in charge of the caves. This arrangement was confirmed by the king Gīrvana Yuddha (1799–1816), the son of Rana Bahadur Shah. The disciples of Manohar Giri held this position until the end of the 19th century, a period in which an event took place that changed the course of things. According to Gopal Giri, one of his ancestors, Naran Giri, was too young when his father died and thus not able to fulfill the role of *mahant*. His father's sister then left for Okhaldhunga in search of other Giri to officiate.[8] This is how Raj Bol Giri, originally from Bugnam, near Okhaldhunga, arrived at Halesi.

Documents on *guthi* land that I have been able to consult at the National Archives of Kathmandu[9] effectively show that Naran Giri and Raj Bol Giri were contemporaries. Various complaints are found there, made on the one hand by Naran Giri in 1909 and, on the other, by Raj Bol Giri in 1885 and 1926, as well as the date of death of the latter,[10] 1948.

---

4 This copper plaque (*tāma patra*), engraved in 1805 (1861 according to Vikram Samvat, the official Nepalese calendar which begins in 57 BC) is kept in the house of one of the Giri. For the complete text, cf. Buffetrille (1994a: 16–17).

5 *Guthi* means a system of land grants for the benefit of temples and monasteries to finance religious activities. These *guthi* land endowments are inalienable and exempted from taxes for the beneficiary, the *guthiyar* (Regmi 1976). The *guthi birtā* are pieces of land the income from which is given up by the State for the profit of individual holders, by virtue of their status (Brahmans, renunciants, members of the royal family) or of services rendered (soldiers, politicians, etc.) (Bouillier 1997: 725, no. 6). See also Regmi (1978: 255–64, 649–95, 715, 746).

6 It is common for the disciple to be the son but this is not always the case.

7 As a general rule, the *mahant* is the head of a monastery. However, this term is applied to the Giri who are in charge of the caves.

8 A document, National Archives K 128/51 a and b, from the Revenue Bureau of Okhaldunga and addressed to the Guthi Sansthan of Kathmandu contradicts this version because it mentions a complaint made by *mahant* Naran Giri in 1909, following a flood which caused the destruction of ten *muri* of land. Naran Giri would have therefore carried out the duties of *mahant*. I thank Rajam Khatiwoda of the Nepal Research Center for the translation of these documents.

9 K 128/51; K 323/41; K 93/21 A, B, C, D, E, F; K 580/9; K1/52A; K 299/24.

10 Cf. K 93/21 B and D, K 93/21 A, K 299/21 respectively.

All the villagers (including his descendants) affirm that Raj Bol Giri passed himself off to the authorities as the great-grandson of Manohar Giri. In fact, in a document dated 1885[11] and addressed to the Guthi Sansthan, "The Office of Religious Property Management," Raj Bol Giri states that he is the [great]-grandson of Manohar Giri[12] and calls for the government (by way of the Guthi Sansthan) to recognise that he is the owner of the land. He tells of having found an old document (date unspecified) which he describes as very reliable because it was signed by "His Majesty the Government"—it is therefore a *lālmohar*[13]—and which affirms that *guthi* land must be passed on by linear inheritance. Raj Bol Giri won his case and the land was henceforth registered in his name and officially passed down in linear inheritance.[14] Following these events, Naran was even forced to leave Halesi according to Gopal Giri and he moved to Pathale, a nearby village.

While it was effectively suggested to me several times during my previous fieldtrips that Raj Bol Giri was not the descendant of Manohar Giri, I never could confirm this. But political events of the last decade (to which we shall return) have changed the relationships of power and tongues have loosened.

In attributing to himself the position of legitimate heir, Raj Bol Giri was able to turn to his advantage and to that of his descendants the post of *mahant*. He and his heirs also became *guthiyar*, that is to say the beneficiaries of the *guthi* and all the rights associated with it: the right to land income, taxes, legal fines and free labour (corvée) owed by the tenant farmers. We thus understand that one of his heirs commented on the situation in these terms: "from that day, the sun rose for us and set for the Gopal lineage".[15]

In addition, another document (K 299/21), dating back to 1948, explains that on the death of Raj Bol Giri, a man by the name of Tulsiram Giri, introduced not as his son but as "the person who was closest to him", claimed the land. He obtained it and he and his two

[11] National Archives K 93/21 B. This document is an official document but it seems, however, to have been written by Raj Bol Giri because some passages begin with "I".

[12] It is written "grandson", but an anonymous hand has added "great".

[13] A royal edict that carries the red seal of the king.

[14] This type of situation appears to be quite common. See Bouillier (1979: 105–27, particularly pp. 118 and 119).

[15] Conversation with Hemanta Giri (08/07/2007).

brothers, Dan Bahadur and Amrit, occupied the post of *mahant* in turn for five years, until their death (cf. fig. 1, family tree). After that, their sons succeeded them in the post. A document in the possession of Bam Prasad Giri underlines the numerous times the brothers came into conflict, leading the Guthi Sansthan to intervene and propose that each hold the position of *mahant* in turn. This document also orders them to state the exact amount of revenues and expenditures concerning the caves (which leads one to surmise some earlier problems concerning these donations).

The two Giri lineages now reside at Halesi. The one claiming descent from Raj Bol Giri is made up of seven households organised around the sons of Tulsiram, Dan Bahadur and Amrit Giri; that of Manohar Giri consists of no more than one descendant, Gopal Giri, who has only one son.

b. The Sherpa

Thanks to the copper plaque (*tāma patra*) of 1805, put up in the time of king Gīrvana Yuddha, we know that the Giri assumed the responsibility of the worship of Mahādev in these caves in 1786, following their discovery by a Rai hunter. However, to my knowledge, no document attests the date when the Sherpa began to venerate this place. Pieces of information nevertheless lead us to assume that it would also be from the 18th century.

Originally from eastern Tibet, the Sherpa arrived in the Solu-Khumbu region in the 16th century (Oppitz 1968). It is, therefore, unlikely that they worshipped at the Halesi-Māratika caves before that.

Hindus call these caves Mahādevsthan (Temple of Mahādev) or Halesi;[16] the Sherpa refer to them as Māratika or Halesi-Māratika. Now, the caves of Māratika are mentioned in Tibetan literature from the 12th century onwards. In the *Bka' thang zangs gling ma* (1987: 21–22) of Nyang ral Nyi ma'i 'od zer (1124 or 1136–1192/1204), one of the biographies of Padmasambhava, they are located in India, south of Mount Potala, the palace of Avalokiteśvara. *The Padma thang yig Shel brag ma* of O rgyan gling pa (14th century),[17] another biography of Padmasambhava, also situates them on Mount Potala.

[16] According to one of my Giri informants, the toponym Halesi was derived from the name of a bird, *haleso*, a great number of which lived in this area which used to be a vast jungle. The written sources at my disposal (including *guthi* texts) use no other names.

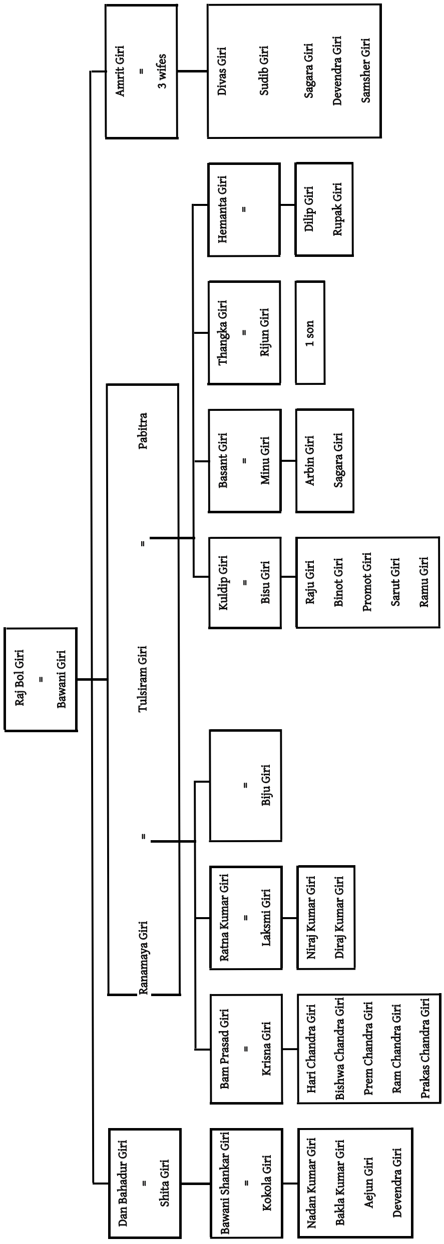


Fig. 1: Family tree of the Giris

It is not until the 18th century, with the "Pilgrimage guide of Nepal" (*Bal yul gnas yig*) of Ngag dbang rdo rje (Dowman 1981: 250), printed in 1774, as well as in the "Guide to holy places of Nepal" (*Bal po'i gnas kyi dkar chag*) of the 4th Khams sprul Chos kyi nyi ma (1730–1779)[18] that we find the caves of Māratika situated in Nepal (according to the titles). The toponym Ha las shod / Ha les [*sic*] shan / Ha la shan / Ha las shi ri and other variants (henceforth Halesi) appear, to my knowledge, only in pilgrimage guides, some of which include neither a date, nor the name of the author.[19] The texts for which the author is identified are very recent.[20]

The Tibetans, showing once more their taste for etymology, explain the name of Halesi by the exclamation of amazement (*ha las pa*) uttered at the sight of these caves by the ministers who accompanied Padmasambhava at the time of his coming to Tibet (Buffetrille 2000: 327).

Now, the studies of F.K. Ehrhard have shown that in the 18th century, three Tibetan masters played a very important role in the codification and transmission of Rnying ma teachings from Tibet to Nepal: Kaḥ thog Rig 'dzin tshe dbang nor bu (1698–1755), Karma 'Phrin las bdud 'joms (1726–1789) and Brag dkar rta so sprul sku Chos kyi dbang phyug (1775–1837). It is also at this time that two Sherpa of the Nyang clan, Rdo rje 'jigs bral and particularly Karma Nges don, strove for the diffusion in the Sherpa region of the "treasures" (*gter ma*) of 'Ja' tshon snying po (1585–1656) and Gter bdag gling pa (1646–1714).[21] One can imagine that the Rnying ma revival experienced by the Sherpa region in the 18th century could have been the origin of renewed interest in the *Bka' thang*.

---

17 *U rgyan gu ru padma 'byung gnas kyi skyes rabs rnam thar pa rgyas par bkod pa padma'i bka'i thang yig*: folio 116. See also the translation by G.C. Toussaint (1979: 193–94).

18 Macdonald and Dvags po Rinpoche (1981: 263).

19 See the bibliography in Buffetrille (1994a).

20 Among the authors are Sangs rgyas bstan 'dzin; Ngag dbang chos 'phel rgya mtsho; Bya bral Rinpoche (Buffetrille 2000: 275; 327–33; 334–41); Namkhai Norbu (1992). As for Dudjom Rinpoche (1991: 470), he does not locate them in any specific place.

21 See Ehrhard (1993: 77–100). Rdo rje 'jigs bral and Karma Nges don went to Mang yul Gung thang. There, Karma Nges don attended the teachings of Karma 'Phrin las bdud 'jom and Brag dkar rta so sprul sku Chos kyi dbang phyug (Ehrhard 2004: 82, no. 2).

Moreover, as we are nowadays witnessing the creation of a new religious geography by Tibetans in exile, it is likely that the Sherpa, once settled in Nepal, looked for special places, permanent material supports, on which to fix the collective religious memory of the group (Halbwachs 1997 [1950]: 227–36). They were easily able to have knowledge of the Halesi caves which were on the traditional trade route between Solu-Khumbu and the Terai. Their exterior configuration, and especially their impressive size and the unusual appearance of the interior well qualified the Halesi caves as a holy place: narrow natural passages between two rocks that correspond to the passages to hell (*dmyal lam*), numerous stalactites and stalagmites, rocky formations that conjure up all sorts of 'self-produced' deities, not forgetting the presence of countless bats. It is also well-known that communities of Rnying ma obedience have always had the tendency to see in caves places consecrated by Padmasambhava. Further, the legitimisation of this site was assured by its association with India, the holy land of Buddhism.

As far as the Sherpa are concerned, all the signs point back to the 18th century. But what about the Tibetans? It seems unlikely that Tibetans went to Halesi on pilgrimage before their exile, with the exception of religious figures of the Stod region who had contacts with the Sherpa, like A rtsa bla ma Thub brtan rnam rgyal dpal ldan, a religious practitioner from Kham and disciple of Gru gu rtogs ldan Shakya Śri (1853–1919) who went there at the beginning of the 20th century in the company of Sherpa monks (Jamyang Wangmo 2005: 68). All the routes Tibetans took for trade or to go on pilgrimage to the great places of Indian Buddhism—if we except the one through Nang pa la—passed far from the caves.

Thus, until new sources contradict this hypothesis, the frequenting of the caves by Buddhists does not seem to go further back than the 18th century, therefore about the same time as for the Hindus.

Over the course of many years, several communities have honoured these same caves, worshipped the same rocky concretions, passed through the same narrow passages, but each with its own mythology, its own interpretation of the caves and the many elements that they contain.[22] Until the 1980s, a peaceful cohabitation existed but it was upset, one day, by the arrival of a Sherpa practitioner who decided to 'take' possession of this place dedicated to Padmasambhava and of which Śiva was, according to him, the simple "caretaker" (*dkon gnyer*).

[22] See Buffetrille (1994b) for a more detailed study.

c. Māratika Lama[23]

An individual whose role would turn out to be crucial, Ngag dbang chos 'phel rgya mtsho, known later by the name of Māratika Lama,[24] settled at Halesi in 1980. A Tantric practitioner (*sngags pa*) originally from the Kulung region of north-eastern Nepal, he studied for ten years at Rdza rong phu, a Rnying ma monastery located in Tibet, at the foot of Everest; then he returned to the Sherpa region where he pursued his practices. One day, when he was meditating at Halesi, he had a vision that indicated to him that he "should take" (*blangs dgos*) the holy place.[25] Mkhyen brtse Rinpoche (1910–1991), 'Khrul zhig Rinpoche (1924–2011)[26] and Bdud 'joms Rinpoche (1904–1987), three great Rnying ma masters, encouraged him in this course. He arrived at Halesi in 1980 and asked the Giri for permission to settle near the upper cave to meditate; the Giri agreed to this. At the end of his retreat, he proposed to them to bring about some improvements in the village. Hemanta Giri, although young at the time, remembers these plans very well:

> He said that he wanted to clean the caves which were very dirty, tidy up the entrance, bring drinking water to the village and establish several water supply points, reintroduce deer, pheasants, birds and other animals in order to make the place more attractive and also build a fence to prevent the animals from getting out, improve the circumambulation path.[27]

He accomplished part of his programme, then announced that he wanted to build a monastery which, he maintained, would be the source of

---

[23] Only the main features will be outline here; the role of this figure is dealt with in more detail in Buffetrille (1994a).

[24] Māratika Lama was not a lama in the strict sense of the term; however I shall retain this designation, since it has become the name by which he is generally known. Cf. Buffetrille (1994a).

[25] Conversation of 06/03/1992, but at the time of a later conversation (15/03/1992), he told me that Bdud 'joms Rinpoche, Mkhyen brtse Rinpoche and 'Khrul zhig Rinpoche ordered him to "take" the holy place.

[26] 'Khrul zhig Rinpoche was born in 1923 at G.yar 'brog Stag lung, in Central Tibet. He entered Rdza rong phu monastery as a child and was ordained novice (*rab byung*) at the age of eight years. He then began his studies under the direction of Ngag dbang bstan 'dzin nor bu (1867–1940), the founder of Rong phu monastery. After the death of his master, he became abbot of this monastic community. Following the Chinese invasion, he escaped in 1959 and settled with his disciples in the eastern region of Nepal, in Solu, where he built Thub bstan chos gling monastery, located north of Junbesi. Later in life he became the charismatic head of the Rnying ma school (See Aziz 1978: 211–15). His role was very important at Halesi, as we shall see. He died in Nepal on 2 September 2011. For Mkhyen brtse Rinpoche, cf. Ricard 1996.

many benefits for the holy place because it would attract Buddhists. The Giri did not oppose this, but refused to let him build it in front of the caves. Instead, they gave him (sold him?) the land where the monastery is today, just beside the entrance of the caves, and which was then occupied by a hermitage (*kuti*) which they moved.

The construction of the monastery, which was named Mā ra ti ka 'Chi med rtag brtan chos gling, was completed at the end of 1984 thanks to various donations including those of the high Tibetan dignitaries previously cited. The Lama then managed, by means that I have never been able to clarify in detail, to have the entire hill in which the caves are located (sixty-one *ropani*)[28] registered in his name, and then in the names of his six children (four boys and two girls).[29] The Giri only learned of this four months later, when according to them it was too late to contest legally. Not acknowledging defeat, however, they sent a letter of protest to the king who asked the supreme court to take a quick decision. For his part, the Lama also wrote to the supreme court. The legal proceedings went on for years[30] before the property deed in favour of the children of the Lama was abrogated. Following an inquiry, in 2000 the supreme court took the decision to register the fourteen *anna*s[31] of land on which the monastery is built in the name of the Lama and the rest of the hill reverted to the *guthi* system.

The Giri, for their part, recognise having profited from the coming of an employee of the cadastral survey (*nāpī*) in 1985 to register a number of pieces of *guthi* land in their names, which allows them henceforth to sell the land. However, large pieces of land in *rājguthi*[32] still exist some distance from Halesi, near the Sun Khosi and the Dudh Kosi (at Lubu and Mahadevbesi).

Another cause of dissension between the Lama and the Giri concerned the Dalits (untouchables). A certain number of them live at

---

28 One *ropani* = about 500 m^2.

29 To this day I have never been able to understand clearly the intrigues—of the Lama any more than the Giri—concerning the Halesi lands; and this in spite of many conversations. The responses obtained vary from one informant to another, sometimes from one conversation to another, and often from one year to another.

30 Between five and six years according to Karma dbang phyug, one of the sons of Māratika Lama. The discussions continued well after the death of the Lama.

31 16 *anna*s = 1 *ropani*.

32 "According to existing law and customs, a Rājguthi is a corporate body which enjoys full ownership rights on the lands endowed to it; the government only assumed general powers of supervision and management" (Regmi 1978: 669).

Halesi and all agree that the Giri called on them when they were short of labourers, paying them little or nothing, and if they refused they were punished and could even be beaten. The Giri being the only persons to whom they could go in case of need, they had no other choice than to do what was asked of them. The strained relations that existed between the Giri and the Dalits only got worse with the coming of the Lama who often employed untouchables and paid them decently for their work.

Further regarding the Dalits, a new source of income derives from their wages as porters for Buddhist pilgrims (local and Western), the number of whom is steadily growing, especially since the coming of the king and the launch of his development plan.

2. *The development plan (guru yojanā)*

King Birendra went to Halesi in 1982 and decided on a development plan (*guru yojanā*), which led some villagers to employ clever manoeuvres in the face of the new stakes. A report produced in 2000 by the Ministry of Physical Planning and Works describes the development plan launched by the king in 1982. It indicates what has been realised and what remains to be done.[33] The stated objective is to protect the historical, social and religious value of this place, described as the "Eastern Paśupatinath", and to make its importance known among the population. It is therefore not surprising that everything in this report is viewed from a Hindu perspective even though the presence of the monastery—which was not completed at the time of the monarch's visit—and that of Māratika Lama are far from ignored.

The text confirms that in 1786 the land was given in *guthi birtā* to Manohar Giri, the *mahant-pujari*, who then officiated twice a day as well as at the time of the four festivals cited earlier, and that a royal edict (*lālmohar*) was inscribed on a copper plaque. This text also tells us that, following the visit of the king in 1982, the boundaries of the development plan were fixed—on a perimeter of one hundred and fifty or two hundred metres from the caves, according to the inhabitants.

[33] I have been able to have access to the file which is in the library of the Ministry of Physical Planning and Works. I extend all my thanks to Sujata Bajracharya who made the translation of the text.

Theoretically, once a development plan (*guru yojanā*) is set, the villagers residing within the fixed boundaries are expelled but must be compensated, and it is no longer possible to use the land for any purpose other than that determined in the scope of the *guru yojanā*. This is what was done, in part. Some houses were indeed destroyed and rebuilt elsewhere, and a little money was paid to the inhabitants. Out of twenty letters contained in the dossier and which are exchanges between either the office of Khotang district and various ministries in Kathmandu or the Guthi Sansthan, nine concern Māratika Lama who, in spite of the amount paid (92,000 rupees) to enable him to move the monastery, did not take the money and demonstrated total passivity. A piece of land was even offered to him, three hundred metres from the caves. One of the reasons put forward for the necessity of this move is the fragility of the stones in the caves, many of which had been cracked, according to the authorities, because of the noise created by the daily rituals in the temple!

Following a study carried out by an interdisciplinary team, a plan was worked out: construction of an area for a permanent market (with autorisation for owners of land in the area covered by the development plan to open shops, the size of each shop being proportional to the size of the owner's landholding); an area for a temporary market; an area for governmental and semi-governmental offices (bank, police, army personnel, nursing station, post office, etc.); a tourism area (with hotels, museum, information centre, shops), and gardens. It was envisaged that some land be reserved for literary and cultural activities which would take place during the four main festivals. In addition, a place well away from the caves was intended for animal sacrifices, since taking life near the holy place is forbidden; another was anticipated for gatherings; and one for the sale of flowers. A parking lot, a water reservoir, toilets and public baths were also planned. The plan specifies that no new buildings might be added to the school, that is situated to the south-west—whereas the campus (10+2) was under construction in July 2007 on land included in the *guru yojanā*. Land situated outside the development plan was reserved for the villagers. The authors of the plan recognised the drawbacks related to the absence of a road, but had no doubt that the problem would be resolved in a few years.

The implementation of this plan was entrusted to the Halesi-Mahādevan Development Committee, whose role it was to appoint five

to seven members each year to produce a progress report that must be sent to the government for ratification. However, it was clearly specified that the government cannot provide continuous support to the committee, which was advised to find its own sources of revenue, for example by publishing booklets and guides, creating shops and a communication centre (internet, mail, telephone, fax), and so forth. The plan anticipates completion of work within five years of its inception, but recognises that the market and the tourism areas could not be finished before ten or twelve years.

Subsequent political events—the democratic movement and the restoration of the multiparty system in 1990, followed by the Maoist insurrection—resulted in the temporary suspension of the plan. By 2007, eighteen years after the order of the king and seven years after the formulation of the plan, only a few small tasks had been completed: construction of stairs for descending into the caves, a wall to prevent falling stones, a path around the caves. Despite the certainty expressed in the plan that road access would be available in the near future, only one road connecting Kattari (in the Terai) to Diktel, then to Halesi, is under construction, and that project has been running for more than fifteen years. But it was still not tarmacked at the time of writing (2008) and is therefore not passable in all seasons. Furthermore, the work has now stopped for lack of money, which has not prevented the price of land along the edge of the future road from rising considerably.

The development plan is not, however, forever dead and forgotten, and since it can resume at any time, it is a source of rancour and suspicion. These sentiments were expressed in January 2003, at the time of the visit of King Gyanendra, the brother of the late King Birendra and his successor on the throne following the massacre of the royal family in 2001. On this occasion, the villagers forwarded letters to him in which they complained about the excessive area of the *guru yojanā* land and asked him to cancel the plan as it was conceived. Most of them wanted the *guru yojanā* land to include only what lay within the circumambulation path. According to the villagers, the king gave an oral agreement, but though the head of the Village Development Committee (VDC) took thirty rupees from each household to make this decision official, nothing has come of it to this day. Some people are taking advantage of this "legal vacuum" and are building on this land which nominally belongs to the *guru yojanā*, while being aware of the precariousness of their situation. For their part, the Giri, wishing to see their

land protected, assert that they want to keep it outside the *guru yojanā* to build administrative buildings there in the future. Some villagers, particularly those whose houses were destroyed, understandably feel swindled, and would like the land area included in the *guru yojanā* to be the same for all if the development plan is ever realised.

But other significant events have had an effect on the site.

II. Buddhicisation of the site

1. *The death of Māratika Lama*[34]

In 1992, when his wife died, Māratika Lama took the vows of an ordained monk (*dge slong*) before 'Khrul zhig Rinpoche, one of his root-lamas (*rtsa ba'i bla ma*), at the monastery of Thub bstan chos gling (Solu). From that day, the hierarch adopted the practice of making a retreat once or twice a year in the Halesi monastery.

Māratika Lama died on the 25th day of the 12th month of the Fire-Mouse Year (2 February 1997) at Halesi, in the monastery that he had founded and for which he had struggled so hard. A short time earlier, he had had a vision foretelling not only his imminent death but also that he would have a reincarnation. He accordingly decided to go to Thub bstan chos gling monastery in the company of Karma dbang phyug, one of his sons, to invite 'Khrul zhig Rinpoche to Halesi-Māratika. Faced with the Lama's insistence, the hierarch ended up accepting the invitation. Upon returning to Māratika, both entered into retreat. One day, the Rinpoche invited Māratika Lama and they had a discussion that lasted more than five hours. The following night, the latter died while in meditation on his throne. He remained in meditation (*thugs dam la bzhugs*) for five days.[35] The cremation took place on one of the hills that surround Halesi. A *maṇḍala* was made, then covered with a metal pot on which rested the feet of the Lama, who was cremated in this position.

[34] All the information on the death of Māratika Lama and the discovery of his reincarnation comes essentially from conversations with Karma dbang phyug, one of his sons; from Ngag dbang rdo rje, the treasurer of the monastery; and from Wangchu Sherpa, the 'protector' (*saṃrakṣak*) of the monastery.

[35] The bodies of some great religious practitioners remain, after death, in the position of meditation and do not decompose for a period that can vary from three to seven days.

It is said that numerous auspicious signs appeared: a rainbow, footprints of birds in the ashes, footprints in the eastern section of the *maṇḍala*, etc. Four thousand votive figurines (*tsha tsha*) were made, and two thousand of them sent to various monasteries in order to transmit the blessing of the master. The ashes of the Lama were cast into the Dudh Kosi and a reliquary (*sku gdung*) was built and placed in the monastery.

2. *Bstan 'dzin chos rgyal Rinpoche, Māratika Lama's reincarnation*

Following the death of Māratika Lama, 'Khrul zhig Rinpoche explained to Karma dbang phyug that his father had told him that he knew he would be reborn in Sikkim, where he had resided when he was young and where he had built a *stūpa* (more precisely at Rtse mo thang). The hierarch assured that many signs had confirmed that there would be a reincarnation. Karma asked him then to compose a prayer that allowed him to keep contact with his father, which 'Khrul zhig Rinpoche did:[36]

> *Oṃ swa sti*! You who are the very incarnation of the compassion of all the victorious-ones [Avalokiteśvara],
> You, 'Jam dpal dbyangs (Mañjuśrī) who possess the supreme knowledge and wisdom,
> And you, Phyag na rdo rje (Vajrapāṇi), powerful sovereign,
> May you grant happiness and well-being
> Thanks to the Mā ra ti ka caves of longevity.
>
> I offer up a prayer to the incomparable and totally radiant *bla ma*
> Whose ineffable words are like the vast space,
> Whose multiplicity of unceasing physical manifestations is a dance [which is at] the base of initiations,
> Whose lofty deeds are useful to disciples, to the Buddhist doctrine and to beings.
>
> You the protector, whatever paradise you are going to and wherever you live,
> To us, your sons, who pray to you from the bottom of our hearts,
> Please confer everything without exception: your constant protection, your body, your speech, your spirit, your wisdom, your enlightened activity, your accomplishments, your blessings.
>
> When my disciple, the *bla ma* of Mā ra ti ka, Ngag dbang chos 'phel rgya mtsho peacefully departed, surrounded by auspicious signs, at the age of

[36] Lopon Karma Wangchhu (2000: 72–73).

seventy-six years, his son and disciple, Karma dbang phyug, exhorted me while giving me a ceremonial scarf (*kha btags*) and a statue: "It must be a prayer that disciples can repeat perpetually". Thus have I, the old monk Wagindra dharma ti ['Khrul zhig Rinpoche], composed [this text at the monastery of] 'Chi med rtag brtan chos gling this 2nd day of the 2nd month of the Fire-Ox Year (1997).
maṅga laṃ

Then, still at the request of Karma dbang phyug, he composed a "prayer for swift return" (*myur byon gsol 'debs*),[37] an entirely traditional act but not an automatic one.

Prayer for the swift return of Mā ra ti ka bla ma *Ngag dbang chos 'phel rgya mtsho by 'Khrul zhig rin po che*
Oṃ swa sti! May Gru 'dzin mgon (Avalokiteśvara), Mtsho skyes rje (Padmasambhava), Rdo rje 'dzin (Vajradhara), Mkhan chen Byang chub sems (Śāntarakṣita), Zur phud lnga pa (Mañjuśrī) and Tshangs pa lha me tog (Khri Srong lde btsan), and no other, grant happiness and well-being, they who perfected a state of perfect awareness from the beginning.
You, the adamantine body of 'Jam dpal [dbyangs] (Mañjuśrī), have obtained the power of speech,
Make the offering of holy speech which spreads the Dharma for the good of others.
O you who are worthy of being compared to the ocean of powerful strength of the Master of Secrets [Phyag na rdo rje],
You who perform the dance of the *nirmāṇakāya* without falling into the *nirvāṇa* of the small vehicle,[38]
Make the dance of your manifestation come swiftly,
In order to expand and renovate this excellent holy place
Where O rgyan, the lord who knows the three times, achieved an immortal adamantine body.
Because you are learned in the Sūtras, the Tantras and the transmissions,
Because you know how to distinguish between the real meaning and the errors of interpretation,
And because you possess at the same time the spiritual and intellectual achievement of the totally mastered wisdom that comes from meditation,
May you be beneficial for the doctrine and living beings in this time of degeneration.
Ngag dbang 'jigs bral chos kyi dbang phyug, spiritual son of the *bla ma*, whom I have appointed representative of the *bla ma*, has exhorted me with the present of a ceremonial scarf (*kha btags*) and a statue and say-

[37] Lopon Karma Wangchhu (2000: 71–72). See Cabezón (1996: 351) on the subject of "prayers for a swift return" (*myur byon*).
[38] That is to say, the *nirvāṇa* in which one does not do good for others (my thanks to Stéphane Arguillère for his assistance in the translation of this verse).

> ing: "There must be a prayer for the swift return of the excellent *bla ma*, holder of the holy place of 'Chid med rtag brtan chos gling, called the caves of Mā ra ti ka or Ha las bshad". Therefore [I] Ngag dbang chos kyi blo gros ['Khrul zhig Rinpoche], disciple of the Buddha, wrote this at sunrise on the 3rd day of the month of joy (?) (*zla ba'i dga' ba*)[39] of the Earth-Tiger Year (1998).
> Victory!

These two prayers were recited for more than a year at the Māratika monastery and the "prayer of swift return" was also said at Thub bstan chos gling. They follow the traditional model of these prayers: they not only glorify the merits of Māratika Lama with dazzling praise that would have been impossible to imagine in his lifetime, but they also fully justify the coming of a reincarnation.

Subsequently, the Rinpoche had a vision in which Māratika Lama was reborn in Sikkim, and in 1998 he wrote a letter of prediction.[40]

> *Thoughts of 'Khrul zhig Rinpoche concerning the birth in Sikkim of the reincarnation of Mā ra ti ka* bla ma
> As the fruit of my prayer to the three jewels and to the *bla ma*, the reincarnation of Mā ra ti ka bla [ma], Ngag dbang chos 'phel, will be found, if one looks for it, in the hidden country of Sikkim. [The name of the] father contains [the letter] I, that of the mother [the letter] U. He will be [born] in an Iron-Dragon Year [2000]. From now on, I am going to pray [that he be found].
> *Dharmasa so*!

Karma dbang phyug then went to Gangtok (Sikkim), and there he let it be known that he was looking for any boy born in an Iron-Dragon Year who had shown particular signs. A child was found. His mother had taken him to 'Khrul zhig Rinpoche soon after his birth. The latter gave the child a name while stressing how remarkable he was and making clear that he must be protected from any defilement: among other things, he must not be given meat. The father, a Sherpa, was called Tshe ring, and his name corresponded well to the prediction. However, that of his mother, Shanta san, posed a few problems for Karma, who shared them with the Rinpoche. The latter explained that the mother was

[39] I have found no reference to *dga' ba* as a denomination of a lunar month. "*Dga' ba* is one of the twenty-seven combinations that takes into account the respective positions of the sun and the moon on the circle of the ecliptic" (E-mail from P. Cornu 21/04/2009). See Cornu (1999: 251–53).

[40] Lopon Karma Wangchuk (n.d.: 22).

Tamang and not Sherpa, and that the name Shanta san actually corresponded to Sunita, the name she was given at birth.

Karma went to Sikkim several times, and he also took the child to Nepal. Various signs convinced him that this child was indeed the reincarnation of his father. Among them, from the age of two years, he asked to return to Nepal where, he said, his house was; he had never wanted to drink his mother's milk but only cow's milk; he recognised objects that had belonged to Māratika Lama. Further, as soon as he arrived in Kathmandu, he asked to go to Halesi. Then, once when Karma was in Darjeeling to hear teachings given by the Dalai Lama, after three days of teachings he wanted to go to Sikkim. The child had sensed his coming and asked his parents to build a bathroom which only Karma—whose next arrival he announced in advance—and he would be able to use. The child was three years old.

In 2002, 'Khrul zhig Rinpoche wrote a letter confirming that Bstan 'dzin chos rgyal was indeed the reincarnation of Māratika Lama:[41]

> *Concerning the authentication by His Holiness 'Khrul zhig Rinpoche of the reincarnation of Mā ra ti ka* bla ma, *Bstan 'dzin chos rgyal*
> Thanks to repeated investigations, it is sure that the child of the couple of whom the father is the Sherpa Tshe ring and the mother [named] San tha ma ya, is the reincarnation of the excellent bla ma of Mā ra ti ka, Ngag dbang chos 'phel. It is right to recite 100,000 [prayers to] Sgrol ma (Tārā) to dispel obstacles, 100,000 *dhāraṇi* of longevity, 100,000 mantras of one hundred syllables, and [also] to free more than a hundred animals. Written by Rdza rong 'Khrul zhig zhwa [l]de'u pa Ngag dbang chos [kyi] blo [gros], the 15th day of the 11th month of the Water Horse Year (2002).

The Sherpa community was pleasantly surprised that the young reincarnation had been found among the Sherpa and not among the Tibetans, as is generally the case. Some put forward a practical explanation and pointed out that the warm climate of the Halesi region was not very congenial to Tibetans.

The child stayed in Sikkim until January 2005, when 'Khrul zhig Rinpoche wrote to the parents to request the return of the young boy to Nepal.[42]

> *Letter addressed to the father and mother of the reincarnation of Mā ra ti ka* bla ma *by His Holiness 'Khrul zhig Rinpoche*
> Bstan 'dzin chos rgyal, reincarnation of the excellent *bla ma* of Mā ra ti

---

41 Lopon Karma Wangchuk (n.d.: 23).
42 Lopon Karma Wangchuk (n.d.: 24).

> ka, Ngag dbang chos ’phel, born in the Iron-Dragon Year, must be kept in a clean place by his father and mother who must take care of him until the age of five.
> He must be sent back to *bla ma* Karma dbang phyug of Mā ra ti ka by the future Wood-Bird Year (2005). I request the father Tshe ring Sherpa and the mother San ta mā ya [San tha ma ya] to accept what has been agreed.
> Rdza rong ’Khrul zhig zhwa sprul, the 15th day of the 12th month of the Water-Horse Year (2002)

After his enthronement at the Sherpa monastery in Bodnath on 17 June 2005, the child left for Halesi in the company of ’Khrul zhig Rinpoche. There, they say, he recognised his monastery, as well as many objects, and he spontaneously climbed up onto the throne of his predecessor. A grand ceremony took place during which many visitors were welcomed, including all the inhabitants of the village. The Buddhists say that the young reincarnation (*yang srid*) gave his blessing to all with the exception of the Giri whom he reproached for having been the source of too many problems. Everyone present could then only acknowledge the exceptional power of the child.

The Giri version, one suspects, is appreciably different. Considering that Māratika Lama demonstrated a great interest for worldly goods, and influenced by a rumour according to which this supposedly religious figure was married to the wife of his younger brother,[43] they have great difficulty imagining that the Lama could have a reincarnation. They acknowledge that the child recognised his monastery and his liturgical objects, but they do not consider him at all as a real reincarnation, giving as their reason the fact that they went to see him and he was incapable of saying their names. The respect that they have for ’Khrul zhig Rinpoche leads them to accept the existence of the *yang srid* while seeing this recognition as a way for the Buddhists to keep an influen-

[43] While marriage with the wife of a deceased elder brother is possible, marriage with the wife of a younger brother is absolutely prohibited. “This is to behave like animals”, according to one of my informants. Various versions of the marriage of Māratika Lama with the wife of his younger brother circulate. According to one of them, recounted by one of his close friends (conversation with Yogpo of 01/07/2007), he had always been married to the same wife but he left for six years to carry out his practice. Upon his return, his wife was living with his younger brother, with whom she had had a child. She then decided to return to her first spouse. None of my informants were able to tell me if this behavior was extremely reprehensible or not, since this case, according to them, was exceptional.

tial monk in this holy place. In any event, it is certain that the presence of Bstan 'dzin chos rgyal Rinpoche assures the Buddhist future of the Halesi-Māratika caves.

The young Rinpoche stayed at Thub bstan chos gling monastery until 2007. At the time of my first visits in 1989 and 1991, there were 150 monks and more than 200 nuns; these days, there are about 200 monks and 300 nuns and the monastery is considerably larger. Since 2008, the child has been in India, at Smin grol gling monastery in Dehra Dun, with the late Khri chen 'Gyur med kun bzang dbang rgyal Rinpoche, in order to complete his education.

The death of Māratika Lama did not signal the end of the quarrels between the monks and the Giri, who not only call them 'meat eaters'—a reproach often made to them by vegetarians—but have gone so far as to send young people to provoke the monks, while the latter ignore all the conflicts that pit the Lama against the Giri. The situation between the Sherpa and the Giri seemed to be at an impasse, but the behaviour of the Tibetan hierarchs, and especially 'Khrul zhig Rinpoche, led to a reversal of the situation.

3. *The Tibetan hierarchs*

Over all the years that Māratika Lama devoted to the Buddhicisation of Halesi, and despite the animosity of the Giri towards him, the support from the Tibetan hierarchs was expressed in gifts of money, encouragement to continue the struggle and sometimes their presence for a particular ceremony or a retreat. In this way they demonstrated their interest for the (re)birth of this site, while the holy places on Tibetan soil are difficult for Tibetan exiles to access. But none of them have really involved themselves actively in this conflict. When Māratika Lama wanted to make a three-year retreat, he asked 'Khrul zhig Rinpoche to take care of the monastery. The latter refused, giving the reason that it was not possible for him to settle in a place where so many inhabitants of the valleys (*rong pa*) lived. He got the same response from other great masters.[44]

However, for several years, 'Khrul zhig Rinpoche has put enormous effort into the development of the village, which has won him the

[44] Conversation with Māratika Lama of 07/03/1992.

favour of the whole population. He became the owner of one of the hills on which he had constructed, for the sum of five lakh rupees,[45] a school built of concrete which replaces a building located a rather long distance away, and which provides education that now goes up to class 10. He has made improvements to another school (VDC 4) at a cost of two lakhs and, aided by Sprul sku Pad ma dbang rgyal (Trulku Pema Wangyal),[46] he financed a fountain (three lakhs) and the construction of a water tank (five lakhs) which provides water to numerous houses. The money comes in large part from donations made at the time of the ceremonies held in the temple or the caves, and the villagers have participated actively in the work.

Moreover, in 2000 'Khrul zhig Rinpoche purchased, for about seven lakh rupees, the hill of Vajrapāṇi situated to the west and marked by a *rnam rgyal stūpa*, with the intention of building a new monastery that would accommodate 150 monks. The hill of Mañjuśrī, to the east, was purchased in different plots by 'Khrul zhig Rinpoche, Steng po che Rinpoche[47] and the monastery of Zhe chen[48] (in Bodnath) with the idea of constructing several religious buildings. There is, therefore, a clear intention to pursue the Buddhicisation initiated by Māratika Lama on the part of these hierarchs.

These future monasteries, the construction of which is linked to the end of the Maoist takeover, will all be of Rnying ma obedience, because if the Dge lugs pa come (if ever they have come, I never encountered them), they have not purchased land here, something that is understandable in view of the history of the place and its links with Padmasambhava. Several Sherpa have also bought land here and there, on the hills near the caves which dispense benefits as much worldly as soteriological. Norbu, Karma's brother, also owns land at the foot of the hill of Mañjuśrī, but he has not taken a decision as to how he wants to use it.

The assistance provided by Tibetan hierarchs has been very much appreciated by the villagers, including the Giri, and this all the more at

---

45 One lakh (Skt. *lakṣa*) = 100,000.

46 Sprul sku Pad ma dbang rgyal is the eldest son of Bka' 'gyur Rinpoche, himself recognised as an emanation of Nam mkha'i snying po, one of the twenty-five disciples of Padmasambhava.

47 Steng po che Rinpoche (b. 1935) is the abbot of the monastery of the same name, in upper Khumbu.

48 On Zhe chen, see M. Hellfer's article in this volume.

a time when the government development plans were halted because of the Maoist troubles.

4. *The Maoist movement in Halesi-Māratika*

While one of the major events of these last fifteen years in Halesi-Māratika was the death of the Lama, the emergence of the Maoist movement and the 'People's War' that began in 1996 and bathed Nepal in blood cannot be passed over. I will not go back over the movement's origins and justifications, as sources on the subject are abundant and well documented.[49] As interesting as the history of Maoists in Halesi is, I will simply stick to the events that have a particular connection to the holy place.

In rereading the many discussions I had with Māratika Lama in the 1990s, I have been struck by the number of times the Lama—to explain the problems he was having with the administration—asserted in a peremptory tone: "Here, they are all communists." Were they at that time? I cannot give an answer to this question.

Following the 'People's War', the Halesi region was said to be pro-Maoist, which some explain as fear of the Maoists. At the time of my April–May 2006 visit, the conflict had calmed down following the king's transfer of full power to the government on April 24. However, many—villagers and monks—still expressed their fear of the Maoists, and also the reprisals they risked if they talked, which was no longer the case in 2007. The people I talked to always spoke of the 'Maoists' as if they formed a group that was somewhat vague, of whom one sole figure sometimes stood out: Mukti, the local Maoist chief and an ethnic Rai,[50] whom they called 'commandant'.

All the Dalits with whom I spoke were very pleased with the Maoist intervention, which signalled for them the end of unpaid labour and bad treatment, and had allowed them to enter the caves. Previously, a breach of this rule was liable to bring severe punishment. However, there is clearly no elimination of castes, and the equality extolled by Maoist ideology, which asserts that "all kinds of exploitation and prejudices

[49] See, among others, *EBHR* (N° 33–34); Hutt (2004); Steinmann (2005).

[50] He would now be a member of the district committee. His involvement was always on the political side; he was not in the People's Liberation Army.

based on caste must disappear"[51] is certainly facing difficulties in becoming a reality.

According to the villagers, the Maoists were initially content to impose prohibitions on alcohol, prostitution, card games, corruption and exploitation. Later, they subjected everyone to the revolutionary tax and each household was required to send at least one person to Maoist meetings, even if they were held in Diktel or Okhaldhunga. No one refused for fear of being punished.

When I arrived in Halesi on 22 May 2006, the village was practically empty of its inhabitants, the school closed. A meeting was taking place in Diktel. Almost all the teachers, the students, some of the Giri and two monks—the number specified by the Maoists—had left to attend the rally. All those I questioned told me they had complied in order to avoid problems (all feared being beaten). According to one of the monks, the 'demonstrators' were organised by village, in groups of varying number, with a Maoist leader for each group. The cost of food and lodging was paid by the Maoists, but not the lost day of work, as was made clear to me by each person I spoke to. While all estimated the crowd at six to seven thousand people, they stressed the fact that there could not have been more than a few hundred *true* Maoists. This was a calm meeting where the participants asked the Maoists what they were going to say at the peace talks which were to take place later.

With the arrival of the Maoists, it did not take long for life to become difficult for the Giri. Until then, they had been the 'kings' of this region, even according to one of them.[52] In fact, they effectively reigned supreme until 1985,[53] when the government took away their right to collect taxes on the income from land cultivated by the tenant farmers, as well as to administer ordinary justice and by the same right to collect judicial fines. The Giri continued, no less than before, to demand seven days of free labour per year from tenant farmers. In the case of refusal, they were punished and received neither the *ṭikā* of the *mahant* at Dasain,[54] nor the receipt certifying that they had paid their taxes and which attested their right to farm this land. If, from this day, the Giri no

[51] Cited by M. Lecomte-Tilouine (Hutt 2004: 114). This is point n° 20 of the 41–point ultimatum presented to the government by B. Bhattarai before the beginning of the "people's war" in February 1996.

[52] Conversation with Hemanta Giri of 13/02/1994.

[53] Conversation with Hemanta Giri of 14/02/1994.

longer saw themselves as the lords they had been, they were still considered by the villagers to be the major landowners, exploiters of the more deprived. They were therefore very much feared and little liked by the low castes, sentiments that were shared by all those who worked on the *guthi* land. The same goes for the Chetris of Mahādevbeshi (a village on the banks of the Sun Kosi, below Halesi), who assert that the Giri tried to appropriate their land by using false title deeds, and that six years of proceedings were necessary for their rights to be recognised. All accuse them of having used for their personal ends money from the *guthi* land, that of donations including animals, and of never having done anything to develop the holy place.

Up till the end of 2004, the Maoists, though very present in the region, did not intervene in the religious activities of the Giri, contenting themselves with observing. After the formation of the popular government (*janasarkar*) in this district at the end of 2004, and at the initiative of the Maoists, a new committee was created, the 'Caves Committee', *Guphā samiti*, replacing the previous one, the 'Guthi Committee', *Guthi samiti*. The Maoist chief told the Giri, who had no choice but to accept, that from now on the Committee would be in charge of the caves.

The *Guphā samiti* is made up of fifteen members: eleven Rai, two Giri, one Dalit and a monk appointed by the monastery. The president is a Chamlinge Rai, of the lineage of Bagbansi Rai, the hunter who discovered the caves. His political preferences are towards the Nepal Congress, but he appreciates the work of the Maoists. The *Guphā samiti* has elaborated some statutes: one of them concerns the position of *pujari*,[55] which from now on can be occupied by a child coming from any family. A new officiant (*pujari*) has been appointed: the son of Gopal Giri. The post of *pujari* has therefore returned to the lineage of Manohar Giri, the original lineage. The 'descendants' of Raj Bol Giri reject this *pujari* because, they say, his mother is Magar.[56] Each day the *pujari* brings donated money to the Committee and receives two hundred rupees per month and 4% of the donations.

[54] In this case, the *ṭikā* (Nep. mark applied to the forehead) given at the time of the Dasain festival in honour of the goddess Durga reconfirms the incumbents of official positions. On the subject of Dasain, see Krauskopff and Lecomte-Tilouine (1998).

[55] Only young boys who have not yet reached puberty can be *pujari*. Until the intervention of the Maoists, the post of *pujari* was shared between the three Giri families of the lineage that is said to be that of Raj Bol Giri.

The *Guphā samiti* has many plans to exploit the holy place, some of which correspond with those of the Buddhists. A *dharmaśāla* to accommodate pilgrims has already been built, the temple surroundings have been cleaned up, and public toilets built as well as a fence demarcating the circumambulation path, something that the monks also wanted. It was decided that the work would begin with money from the Committee and, if necessary, continue with that of the Buddhist monks. It also pays a monthly salary to a *sadhu* who has lived in Halesi for many years in order to keep him from begging from the population.

Furthermore, because the Giri have been accused of not having fulfilled their obligations, the *rājguthi* land in Lubu and Mahādevbeshi has been placed under the control of the *Guphā samiti* which takes fifty per cent of the land income and leaves fifty per cent to those who farm it. From now on the revenue from this land is used to help the schools in two villages. So, not only do the Maoists themselves carry on with the schemes of the royal government, which often used the pretext that rules of the *guthi* system were not being respected in order to recover land income, but they take the same maximum proportion of rents in kind decided in 1972 (Bouillier 1997: 187 and 201, fn. 9).

The amounts demanded of the Giri by the Maoists were particularly large and their 'collaboration' was also required. Consequently, in the last ten years, the inhabitants of three households have left and settled either in Kathmandu, or in Dharan.

The Maoists have also intervened in the quarrels between the Buddhists and the Giri, relations between whom were inflamed again in 2005. The monks had begun to build—with financial help from the central government, which had given them two lakh rupees—a new retreat centre (*mtshams khang*) in place of the one that adjoined the monastery and was in ruins. The Giri forcefully opposed this on the grounds that an excessively heavy building would damage the caves. They even tried to destroy it, but without success. They then sent a letter of protest to the local Maoist chief, who sided with the Buddhists and authorised the construction in exchange for ten per cent of the two lakhs, that is to say 20,000 rupees. To the great surprise of the Giri, who in 2007 still did not know about this financial arrangement, they received a letter stating that the monks could build the place of retreat

[56] The child is indeed a Giri, Gopal's first wife being a Giri, but he remarried a Giri woman whose mother is Magar.

which presented no risk, and threatening retaliation against anyone who opposed it. Subsequently, the monks paid 10,000 rupees for the construction of the first floor and 15,000 rupees for the second. It seems nonetheless that the principal reason for this support was guided more by an ideological line than by financial self interest: we know that, for the Maoists, society is mainly divided into oppressors and oppressed.[57] The Giri being considered exploiters, the Buddhists could only, therefore, be perceived as an 'oppressed minority'.

This has not kept the monks from having to pay the revolutionary tax. The first demand dates from 2005: it called for them to pay one lakh per year to obtain permission to keep more than one monk in the monastery. After many discussions and threats to close the monastery, the Maoists agreed to reduce the amount to 75,000 rupees per year. Putting forward the fact that their money was sufficient only to maintain themselves, the monks succeeded in paying 75,000 over three years. The religious community has never suffered verbal or physical violence from the Maoists. The latter have nevertheless got into the habit of entering the cells as they like and taking what they need; they have, of course, tried to convince the monks of the pointlessness of the religious life, and the importance of enlisting in the Liberation Army, but without great success. However, the one Maoist Sherpa with whom I had the occasion to speak was a former monk from the monastery who decided one day to join the party on the grounds that Nepal is a lawless country.

On the official side, the secretary of the Village Development Committee (VDC), a Rai, was appointed by the government in 1998. When I interviewed him in 2006, he told me that he had suspended all the development plans for three years and frozen the money because he refused, in spite of threats, to pay the 10% demanded by the Maoists. Added to this, according to him, was another difficulty: the workers demanded wages equal to, if not more than, what was paid by the monks. But the situation seemed to improve. Faced with his intransigence, Mukti, the Maoist chief, gave the assurance that he was abandoning the 10%, and the secretary released five lakhs. The VDC secretary also rebelled against the destruction of books containing photographs of the king, while the Maoists provided no replacement books

[57] On the relationships between the Maoists and an 'oppressed minority', namely the Magars, cf. Lecomte-Tilouine (2004: 112–35).

and tried by all means to influence the thinking of the students and the teachers.[58] He explained the sizeable presence of Rai in the Liberation Army by the economic difficulties they were experiencing. But in 2007, the situation changed, after the Maoists entered government and the People's Liberation Army officially laid down their arms.

We see that, even if the development of Halesi was undermined by political events, improvements have still been brought about, not by the governmental authorities, but by the Buddhist monks, which has allowed Tibetan Buddhism a more and more obvious presence. 'Khrul zhig Rinpoche chose to enlist the help of Karma dbang phyug who works actively for the recognition of the Halesi-Māratika caves on an international level.

III. The construction of an international holy place

1. *Karma dbang phyug*

Karma dbang phyug was born in 1969. His first master was his father. At the age of six, in 1975, he entered the Kulung monastery and received his name from the 16th Karma pa. He studied at the monastery of Mā ra ti ka 'Chi med rtag brtan chos gling, at Zhe chen monastery in Bodnath and at the University of Nalanda, in Sikkim, where he obtained the title of abbot (*mkhan po*).[59] He then taught for two years at Halesi. However, he maintains that he is not an abbot but a simple Tantric practitioner (*sngags pa*) like his father, which explains the fact that he is now married. His first contacts with foreign Buddhists, who were Taiwanese, date from before the death of his father. They became disciples of the Lama, who went to Taiwan several times. Karma now, in turn, goes there regularly, and has also opened a centre in New York.

[58] This is ironic in view of the fact that Marxist ideology has often been conveyed by teachers. To avoid answering my questions, one of the teachers I questioned told me he was not able to reveal his political adherence, nor deal with the subject on the grounds that anyone in government service was prohibited from talking politics.

[59] After nine years of studies, followed by three years of meditation or research, the monks can obtain the title of abbot (*mkhan po*) and of *vajra* master (*rdo rje slob dpon*; Skr. *vajrācārya*). The *vajra* master is a master qualified to transmit the teachings of the *vajrayāna*. See Dreyfus on this subject (2003: 136).

’Khrul zhig Rinpoche is well aware of the role that Karma can play in promoting the national and international reputation of the holy place. Thus, after the death of Māratika Lama, he conferred upon him in 1998 the title of abbot (*mkhan po*) of Māratika and also that of vajra master (*rdo rje slob dpon*). He therefore has responsibility for the monastery, and although he has not been there often for the last five years because of the Maoists, he remains very active. To support him, the Rinpoche wrote a letter that might be described as an “attestation of legitimacy” and which, in view of the reputation the hierarch enjoys, can only contribute to Karma’s good standing and thereby bring him many disciples.[60]

> I have named as successor to the throne of the excellent Ngag dbang chos ’phel, my disciple, the *bla ma* of the monastery of Brag phug Mā ra ti ka ’Chi med rtag brtan chos gling, his descendant, the abbot of Mā ra ti ka Ngag dbang ’jig bral chos kyi dbang phyug or Karma dbang phyug.
>
> In this time of degeneration, he has studied, listened, reflected, meditated and practised as well as possible in various bka’ [rgyud] and rnying [ma] places of teaching and practice. He has received from me initiations (*dbang*), transmissions (*lung*), instructions (*khrid*). He is capable of teaching and giving initiations (*dbang*), transmissions (*lung*), instructions (*khrid*) accompanied by beneficial thought and acts.
>
> [Written by] Ngag dbang chos kyi blo gros, the *śrāmana* of Shākya, also know as Rdza rong ’Khrul zhig zhwa sprul, but who has only the outward signs, on the auspicious date of the 9th day of the 1st month of the Iron-Snake Year (2001).

For his part, Karma dbang phyug bought in his own name part of the hill next to that of Vajrapāṇi upon which to set up two retreat centres, one for the locals and the other for Westerners. But Karma’s plans are also directed towards more worldly objectives.

Parallel with his idea of building a retreat centre for Westerners, Karma is contemplating the construction of an inn and also a shop where the Western practitioner would be able to find everything needed to facilitate a pilgrimage. This plan for an inn is a source of tension with one of the members of the Giri community who, in view of the recent throngs of visitors, has himself already built one located below the monks’ cells, beside the road. He wants to sell it for sixteen lakhs, but Karma refuses to buy it because of the high price, and especially for

60 Lopon Karma Wangchuk (n.d.: 27).

fear that the Giri will subsequently demand that it be moved because it is too close to the caves.

Everything is therefore ready for an effective appropriation of the ground as soon as political events permit, but the sole Buddhist foundation that exists now is the monastery built by Māratika Lama and of which Karma is in charge.

At the time of my first stay at Halesi in 1992, only six monks were living at the monastery, of whom two were sons of the Lama: Karma dbang phyug and 'Phrin las nor bu. In 2006, fifteen monks—for whom all costs (education, food and lodging) are paid by Karma dbang phyug—were residing there. Two monks (one Sherpa and one Tibetan) as well as twenty-five nuns (twenty-three originally from Gtsang in Central Tibet and two Sherpa) had been sent from Thub bstan chos gling. Since the nuns could not tolerate the Halesi climate very well, it was decided that they would stay only six months. Their expenses are paid by 'Khrul zhig Rinpoche. They do not benefit from religious education, either at Thub bstan chos gling, or at Halesi-Māratika, and are there to undergo a retreat. In fact, they do the necessary menial work and recite prayers for the long life of the Dalai Lama and that of 'Khrul zhig Rinpoche.

Since 1999, the education of the monks who are dependent on Karma dbang phyug is provided by a *mkhan po* who spends eight months on the site before another succeeds him. In 2007, it was a Sherpa who was dispatched, like those who preceded him, by *mkhan po* Karma rig 'dzin of Sikkim.[61] As for the two monks sent by 'Khrul zhig Rinpoche, they have already completed their education. The monks perform the daily rituals and respond to the requests of the pilgrims—prayers for the dead, 'offering feasts' and so forth—which can be numerous, especially at new year. Moreover, ceremonies newly introduced and on a grander scale now take place at Halesi, and they attract more and more local disciples, of course, as well as foreigners.

[61] *Mkhan po* Rig 'dzin, a Tibetan exile, has been the abbot of the Stag rtsi *bshad grwa* since 1998. This college of philosophy, located near Gangtok, receives students from Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim and Darjeeling. It was founded by the king Chos rgyal Dbang phyug and is the property of the Tsuglakhang trust which he himself established and to which he has given a large part of his possessions (Information from Anna Balikci, e-mail of 04/02/2007).

2. *Ceremonies and festivals*

In 1992, at the time of the new year, there were about three hundred Sherpa pilgrims, but just one Tibetan, a young Rinpoche born in the United States, who arrived from Kathmandu in a helicopter just for two days in the company of his Western disciples. Already at this time, Māratika Lama had the intention of establishing at Halesi a wider range of ritual activities that would be likely to attract devotees from more diverse horizons.

Three ceremonies now take place annually at the monastery: the ritual of longevity (*tshe sgrub*) which lasts seven days; the *sādhana* of the Quintessence of the Body, Speech and Mind (*sku gsung thugs thig sgrub pa*),[62] the transmission (*lung*) of which, along with the commentaries, Māratika Lama received from Ngag dbang bstan 'dzin nor bu (1867–1940), the founder of Rdza rong phu monastery, and which also lasts seven days; finally, the *mani rimdu*,[63] which was instituted in 1994. From the 23rd to the 30th day of the 12th month, the monks perform—in the caves—the dances that they had first learned with the monks of Spyi dbang (Chiwong),[64] then with those of Thub bstan chos gling. Besides these, exceptional ceremonies also take place. They attract local pilgrims but also foreigners, sometimes in considerable numbers, who contribute greatly to enhance the international reputation of the holy place. On 29 December 1995, the ordination (*rab byung*) of the young reincarnation of Mkhyen brtse Rinpoche took place. 'Khrul zhig Rinpoche had identified him following many dreams and visions and gave him the name O rgyan bstan 'dzin 'jigs med lhun grub. Then, in 1997, Bdud 'joms Rinpoche performed a ritual for the enthronement of the reincarnation of Mkhyen brtse Rinpoche; and in 1998 and 1999 Rab 'byams Rinpoche[65] performed a *mahā sādhana* (*sgrub chen*) which lasted a week.

---

62 The *Yang ti sku gsungs thugs thig* is a basic treasure-text (*gter gzhung*) by Dung mtsho ras pa (1267–1329?) which was adapted by Zhwa lde'u 'Khrul zhig mdo sngags bstan 'dzin nor bu. For a short biography of Dung mtsho ras pa, cf. Bradburn (1995: 170–71).

63 On the subject of *mani rimdu*, see Jerstad (1969), Kohn (2001) and Jamyang Wangmo (2008).

64 Cf. Snellgrove (1957).

65 On Rab 'byams Rinpoche, see the article by M. Helffer in this volume.

A very important ceremony dedicated to peace in the world (*'dzam gling zhi bde*) was organised at the instigation of Steng po che Rinpoche and celebrated in 1999 over a nine-day period.[66] Seven thousand Sherpa, seven hundred monks and nuns and four thousand people from other communities (Tibet, Sikkim, Bhutan, western Nepal, Tibetan refugees and Westerners) gathered at Halesi.[67] The committee, made up of thirty-seven Sherpa, and created on this occasion, had no experience, but its members knew that they could count on their own community. This is why only Sherpa were involved in all aspects of the organisation, the realisation and the donations (fifty lakhs were collected).

There has been no problem with the Maoists, who sometimes even help with arrangements. The construction of a *stūpa* beside the circumambulation path commemorated this celebration which was presided over by 'Khrul zhig Rinpoche and Steng po che Rinpoche. In view of the success achieved, the committee envisaged holding this ceremony at Halesi-Māratika for three years running (all the more so since there was enough money), but the distance, the lack of transport and fear of the Maoists resulted in the cancellation of the plan. The remaining money was shared between the Sherpa monastery of Bodnath (twelve lakhs for the construction of the Srung ma'i lha khang) and an initiation (*dbang*) in Namche Bazaar (Khumbu) given by Talung (Stag lung?) Chos skyid Rinpoche (five lakhs). With the balance (seventeen lakhs), a piece of land was purchased at Lumbini on which to build a *dharmaśāla* for the Sherpa. To the great vexation of Karma and a number of villagers of Halesi, only two lakhs were given to the holy place for the installation of a fountain: the political situation had deterred the members of the committee.

This ceremony, which is an expression of Sherpa identity, constitutes further evidence, if it were needed, of the ethnic revival that Nepal is currently experiencing. It is also in keeping with the trend of 'Modernist' Buddhism. Indeed, a first ceremony for peace in the world (*'dzam gling zhi bde*)—a real "invented tradition" (Hobsbawn and Ranger [1983] 2006)—took place at Bodhgayā (place of the Buddha's enlightenment) in 1985, the year when the organisers gave this name to

---

[66] Most of my information on the subject comes from conversations with Wangchu Sherpa who was the president and organiser of this ceremony (August 2007).

[67] See the site: http://www.todo-contest.org/preistraeger/pdf/tengboche-preis-e.pdf which presents this gathering as a political-cultural ethnic meeting (January 2008).

the traditional ceremony of the Great Prayer festival (*smon lam chen mo*), observed by the Dge lugs monasteries in exile,[68] thereby ascribing to this celebration a new, universal orientation. Subsequently, the hierarchs of other schools have in turn organised this ceremony in different places, but always at one of the great sites connected with the Buddha: thus, since 1989, the Rnying ma "Great Prayer" (*rnying ma smon lam chen mo*) for peace in the world, initiated and financed by Tarthang Tulku, takes place annually at Bodhgayā. For their part, some of the Bka' rgyud pa and the Sa skya pa celebrate it at Lumbini. More than twenty thousand people now attend it.

In 1999, the Bodhgayā ceremony for peace in the world and the one at Halesi took place at practically the same time. The Sherpa were very annoyed at this because the 'audience' was split between the two holy places. Since then, a compromise has been reached with the organisers on the Indian side so that this situation is not repeated.

These considerations can explain why the great plan of Karma dbang phyug is to create a "Centre for World Peace", open to all schools of Buddhism and where great masters would come to teach. Moreover, there are other activities based on modern means of communication, aimed at giving this holy place international recognition.

3. *Guided tours, literature and DVD*

One of the many occupations of Karma dbang phyug consists of accompanying pilgrims within the framework of an ecologically-oriented non-governmental organisation that arranges visits to holy places in the Kathmandu valley, then to the Halesi-Māratika caves where the programme promises "that the pilgrim will stay and eat with the monks of the monastery, pass a night in the cave where Padmasambhava slept, visit the Mandāravā cave, the recently discovered Garuda cave, pass through the four passages of hell to increase positive karma and heal past aggressions, meditate in the cave of the *ḍākinī* and make the circumambulation of the hill of Avalokiteśvara".

Written documentation is not forgotten. In 2000, Karma published for the first time a booklet entitled *Mā ra ti ka'i gnas bshad, The Guide to Māratika.* As the title suggests, most of the text is in Tibetan and

---

68 See Ström (1995: 185–86) and Huber (2008: 363).

English. The booklet begins with an introduction written in English, which sets out its objective: “To introduce Māratika to the interested people in the world, specially to serious practitioners of Buddhism”. Then, thirteen letters from high Tibetan dignitaries of various religious schools (including one from the Dalai Lama) extol the caves, the work done by Māratika Lama and Karma dbang phyug for the revitalisation of the holy place, and indicate the various donations they have made. Following this, in Tibetan only—and therefore mainly for the Tibetans—are two prayers, the translations of which are given above. Two other texts, originally written in Tibetan by Māratika Lama at my request—a pilgrimage guide[69] and his biography—are included along with their English translation. The first was published in French only and the second in English and in French.[70] I had, of course, sent a copy to Karma dbang phyug, who, without telling me, put the English translation of the biography of his father—with the notes[71] (!)—in his book, without mentioning the translator. But when I met with him in 2006, he insisted that I had never sent him the article. On the other hand, because he could not understand the French translation of the pilgrimage guide, he asked a Western nun to translate it from Tibetan into English, again without mentioning the name of the translator.

If Karma dbang phyug is aware of the importance of the translation of Tibetan texts into Western languages for Western disciples, he totally neglects ‘Western scholarly discourse’, contrary to other communities for whom articles and books written by anthropologists can serve as a symbolic legitimisation (Agier 1997). Only the Tibetan texts are, for him, the source of legitimacy, a legitimacy necessary when, for example, he appeals to the generosity of donors (in this respect, he is perfectly in accordance with tradition). Further, just as commentators are rarely mentioned in Tibetan texts, he uses Western translations without citing the translators and, here also, is following tradition. In fact, a translator creates nothing and, in the particular case of Halesi, he or she only passes on the words of the one that some consider to be the (re)discoverer, the *gter ston*, of the Halesi-Māratika caves, Ngag dbang chos ’phel.

---

69 A new part was added to the pilgrimage guide published in this booklet.
70 Buffetrille (2000: 327–33 and 1994a: 25–35; 2000: 297–333).
71 Lopon Karma Wangchhu (2000: 52–54).

A few years after the publication of this pilgrimage guide, at the time of the enthronement of Bstan 'dzin chos rgyal Rinpoche, the reincarnation of Māratika Lama, he published in Tibetan and Nepali a magazine entitled *Mā ra ti ka 'Chi med rtag brtan chos gling*, illustrated with many colour photographs of 'Khrul zhig Rinpoche, Māratika Lama, the young reincarnation, but also of himself at the time of his enthronement as *rdo rje slob dpon*. These photographs were accompanied by the various letters written by 'Khrul zhig Rinpoche and the same texts of praise from the greatest contemporary dignitaries.

Thanks to the involvement of 'Khrul zhig Rinpoche, these two publications can only enhance the legitimacy of the new spiritual lineage formed by Māratika Lama, his son and the young reincarnation of the Lama. Karma is now also collecting all the information he can in order, he says, to write a book devoted to the history of Halesi from the most ancient times to the most modern. This is why, at the time of our meeting in 2006 when I asked him to talk about the death of his father, the discovery of his reincarnation, in fact all the events that have taken place at Halesi over these last years, he initially said he could tell me nothing even though he acknowledged that our readers were not the same. He agreed to tell me all (?) only after lengthy discussions, because of our long friendship and with the promise that I would give him—for his future guide—the description of the new road that I was going to take for going to the caves. Karma, like many others who have been 'ethnologised', is reclaiming his own 'cultural capital'. He is one of the actors in the recognition of the caves at the national level, but also at the international level and for that, he uses traditional methods (pilgrimage guides, teachings, rituals) but also modern techniques (DVD, guided tours), in an approach where the sacred and the profane interfuse.

With the help of a Western Buddhist he has also made a DVD which is on sale in Kathmandu. The text, which is very didactic, is read in English in a tediously slow voice in order to enable all listeners to understand. It recounts the history of the caves according to Buddhist sources; then the camera captures 'Khrul zhig Rinpoche on one of his visits. This is followed by a discussion in which the hierarch and Karma dbang phyug talk about the caves and the close ties between 'Khrul zhig Rinpoche and Māratika Lama. After that, the Lama, his young reincarnation and Karma dbang phyug are presented to the viewer. A

few images are devoted to ceremonies and festivals, and the film ends with an appeal to generosity made by Karma.

Karma has also created a website which I could access only after my return to France in 2007.[72] Māratika Lama is presented there as the one who rediscovered the caves and who has worked towards their development. The fact that his autobiography and the pilgrimage guide he wrote have recently been added to the site reinforces his connections with the holy place. Also reproduced is a paragraph from my article (1994a: 38–39)[73] which mentions the Tibetan texts that refer to the caves; then Karma dbang phyug cites the names of the great masters who have written on the subject of the caves, thus underlining the importance of the holy place. Photographs show the monastery and its various activities, the caves and the celebrations that take place there. The fact that the website has only an English-language version makes it clear that it is directed at foreign devotees.

On the page entitled "About Māratika", it is written:

> Other more recent texts such as the Belpo Ne ki karchag (*Bal po'i gnas kyi dkar chag*), "Guide to the sacred places of Nepal" by Khamtrul Choki Nyima (Khams sprul Chos kyi nyi ma) (1730–1780) has written about Māratika cave, moreover a brief introduction written by HH the Dalai Lama, Trulshik Rinpoche, Dudjom Rinpoche, Dilgo Khentse Rinpoche, Chatral Rinpoche, Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, HH Sakya Trizin Rinpoche, Shamar Rinpoche, Situ Rinpoche, Zopa Rinpoche, Lama Ngawang Chophel Gyatso, Māratika Lopon Karma Wangchuk, Katia Buffetrille.

If the mention of a Western scholar's name at the end of a list made up of the highest-ranking present-day Tibetan hierarchs appears most surprising, it can be explained by the desire to show Westerners that there are those among them who demonstrate an interest not only in this holy place, but also in the Tibetan texts dedicated to it.

Just like the publication of the guide and the booklet, the modern methods of diffusion constitute a form of legitimisation of the power of the Buddhists over the caves as they underline their connections with

---

[72] www.Maratika.org (March 2008). The site has been revised since the completion of this article.

[73] The title of my chapter was "Halesi-Māratika in written sources", (as the caves are commonly called) with the Nepalese name placed before the Tibetan in the toponym, whereas Karma chose as his title "Māratika-Halesi in written sources", thus highlighting the Tibetan name of the place.

the holy place dating back to a distant past. Furthermore, the site offers followers the possibility of keeping in touch with Karma dbang phyug wherever he is and also allows him to establish contact with new disciples. Through all these traditional and modern means, a religious community is created, one whose members do not know each other, do not have any connections between one another, but share one same faith, one same sacred geography.

The Buddhicisation that the holy place of Halesi-Māratika has experienced, as well as the actions taken by the various protagonists (Buddhists, Hindus, Maoists) to thwart or, on the contrary, to accelerate this process show the importance of the political, economic and religious stakes.

Conclusion

The transfer of holy places from India to Nepal or Tibet is a phenomenon that is widely attested in the Tibetan tradition. To give just a few examples: the *stūpa* of Bodnath (Bya rung kha shor),[74] La phyi being identified with Godavari (Andhra Pradesh) and Mt Ti se (Kailash) as Himavat.[75] Besides, Halesi-Māratika is experiencing a process of Buddhicisation—a real "invented tradition" (Hobsbawn and Ranger [1983] 2006)—which is found in many other holy places of Nepal and might even be seen as the paradigm of a phenomenon to be found elsewhere in Nepal and in India. Following the exile forced upon them by the Chinese occupation of the 1950s, Tibetans now look for holy places accessible to them, and this phenomenon has had an unexpectly rapid expansion in Nepal over the last thirty years.

In 1989, the lama Sangs rgyas bstan 'dzin[76] told me that he considered Buddhism to be in decline in Nepal.[77] It seems that this remark—by one of the greatest Sherpa scholars—has not been confirmed in the least. Halesi-Māratika is not the only place in Nepal to see this upsurge of Tibetan Buddhism. At the beginning of the 1990s, when just after the

[74] Cf. Blondeau (1982–83: 123–28 ; 1994: 31–36).

[75] See Huber (1990: 121–64).

[76] On Sangs rgyas bstan 'dzin, cf. *Shar pa'i chos byung*, 1971; Macdonald (1987, II: 87–99) and *Shar pa'i chos byung dang mes rabs*, Gangs can rig mdzod no 38, Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 2003.

[77] Conversation of 25/10/1989.

death of Sangs rgyas bstan 'dzin, his disciple Padma mthar phyin took charge of Gser log monastery (Solu) that his master had founded, only a few monks lived there. Twenty-five years later, in 2006, there were sixty-five monks, of whom sixty-three were Sherpa and two Tamang, who were studying under the direction of three abbots (*mkhan po*). The monastery takes full care of its monks—food, lodging, education—who now have the possibility of obtaining a degree of Doctor in Traditional Buddhist Philosophy (*dge bshes*), which was not the case previously. For his part, *mkhan po* Ngag dbang rab dga', a Sherpa who teaches at the monastery of Takshindo, has had a monastery built in the village where he was born, Mera at Solu, where twenty-four Sherpa and Tamang monks are beginning their studies. Karma dbang phyug also hopes to build a monastery in Lumbini as soon as he has raised the necessary money. Thub bstan chos gling, founded by 'Khrul zhig Rinpoche, is another example of the expansion a monastery can experience in two decades.

The Kathmandu valley provides further evidence of this current vitality of Tibetan Buddhism, a vitality which can also be viewed as a dynamic of colonisation—at once both physical and symbolic—given its scale, and which has the full participation of Nepalese Buddhists and Tibetan refugees, as well as Buddhists from Taiwan, Singapore, Japan and the West, who, with their many donations, bring Tibetan Buddhism into the global arena.

Svayambūnath,[78] the most sacred site for the Newars, is another example of a holy place that is experiencing the tightening grasp of Tibetan Buddhism. Imposing monasteries have been built or are under construction on the various surrounding hills, one among them being that of 'Khrul zhig Rinpoche, to the west of Svayambūnath. Moreover, for the last ten years the circumambulation path (*gling skor*) has been lined with numerous *stūpas*, prayer wheels and statues. The Manangi[79] are playing a very important role through their committee, the Tilicho Khangsar Sewa Samiti-Manang, partly derived from the name of their village Khangsar (a village between Manang and Tilicho). At the foot of the hill, to the west, sits the so-called "Buddhapark" in which three

---

[78] See Alexander von Rospatt's article in this volume.

[79] The Manangi are a community in the central Nepal Himalaya, speaking a language closely related to Gurung. Their culture and religion have been subjected to a strong Tibetan influence. Cf. Mazaudon (1978: 158) and van Spengen (2000: 145–72).

giant statues of Padmasambhava, Amitābha and Avalokiteśvara (in his Ṣaḍakṣarī-Lokeśvara aspect) have been erected. The presence of donors is marked by a stone construction representing the village of Khangsar, with its temple, its many Buddhist symbols—a mark of the Manangi's devotion; its cattle—a sign of their prosperity; its wild and mythical animals (snow lion, *garuda*)—which evoke a golden age; its three wise monkeys[80]—recalling the privileges granted to the Manangi in the 19th and 20th centuries that have made them, little by little, great merchants travelling to India, as well as to south-east Asia, as far as Hong Kong.[81] A construction with an aesthetic of questionable taste, it nonetheless entrenches the Manangi presence in the soil of Svayambūnath.

One sees therefore that in spite of the very tense political situation of this last decade, the political, economic and religious stakes are such that everything is set for a rapid expansion of Tibetan Buddhism.

Bibliography

Tibetan sources

Lopon Karma Wangchhu Sherpa, 2000 *Māra ti ka gnas bshad* (*The Guide to Maratika*). Kathmandu: New Nepal Press.

Lopon Karma Wangchuk, n.d. *Mā ra ti ka 'Chi med rtag brtan chos gling*. Kathmandu.

Nyang ral nyi ma 'od zer, 1989 *slob dpon Padma rnam thar zangs gling ma*. Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

Shar pa'i bla ma Sangs rgyas bstan 'dzin and Macdonald, A.W. 1971 *Shar pa'i chos byung sngon med tshangs pa'i dbyu dgu, Documents pour l'étude de la religion et de l'organisation sociale des Sherpa*. Junbesi/Paris-Nanterre: *folio* 15–123.

Western sources

Agier, M. 1997. Ni trop près ni trop loin. De l'implication ethnographique à l'engagement intellectuel. *Gradhiva* 21, 69–76.

Aziz, B.N. 1978. *Tibetan Frontier Families. Reflections of Three Generations from D'ing-ri*. New Delhi/Bombay/Bangalore/Calcutta/Kanpur: Vikas Publishing House.

Bauer, K. M. 2004. *High Frontiers. Dolpo and the Changing World of Himalayan Pastoralists*. New York: Columbia University Press.

[80] The three wise monkeys are, as their name indicates, the symbol of wisdom. They are represented covering their eyes, their ears and their mouth. They have the names "Hear no evil, See no evil, Speak no evil" because no evil can befall anyone who does not hear, see or speak it.

[81] van Spengen (2000: 173ff); Bauer (2004: 71–72).

Blondeau, A. M. 1982–83. Résumé des conférences et travaux. In *Annuaire de l'E.P.H.E. Ve Section. Sciences religieuses* tome 91, 123–28.
— 1994. Bya rung kha shor, légende fondatrice du bouddhisme tibétain. *In* P. Kvaerne (ed.) *Tibetan Studies*. Proceedings of the 6th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies. Fagernes 1992. Oslo: The Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture, vol. 1, 31–48.
Bouillier, V. 1979. *Naître renonçant. Une caste de Sannyāsi villageois au Népal central*. Nanterre: Laboratoire d'ethnologie.
—— 1985. The ambiguous position of renunciants in Nepal: interrelation and ascetiscism and the social order. In *Journal of the Nepal Research Center.* Vol. 7, 199–229.
—— 1997. *Ascètes et rois. Un monastère de Kanphata Yogis au Népal*. Paris: C.N.R.S. Éditions.
Bradburn, L. 1995. *Masters of the Nyingma Lineage*. Crystal Mirror n. 11, Berkeley: Dharma Publishing.
Buffetrille, K. 1994a. *The Halase-Māratika Caves (Eastern Nepal): A Sacred Place Claimed by Both Hindus and Buddhists*. Pondy Papers in Social Sciences 16, Pondicherry: Institut français de Pondichery.
—— 1994b. Revitalisation d'un lieu saint bouddhique : les grottes de Halase-Maratika, Népal oriental (District de Khotang). *In* P. Kvaerne (ed.) *Tibetan Studies*. Proceedings of the 6th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies. Fagernes 1992. Oslo: The Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture, vol. 1, 81–94.
—— 2000. *Pèlerins, lamas et visionnaires. Sources orales et écrites sur les pèlerinages tibétains*. Wiener Studien zur tibetologie und buddhismuskunde. Heft 46. Wien: Arbeitskreis für tibetische une buddhistische studien Universität Wien.
Cabezón, J. I. 1996. Firm feet and long lives: the Zhabs brtan literature of Tibetan Buddhism. *In* J. I. Cabezón and R. R. Jackson (eds) *Tibetan Literature. Studies in Genre*. Ithaca/New York: Snow Lion: 344–357.
Cornu, P. 1999. *L'astrologie tibétaine*. Paris: Éditions Guy Trédaniel.
Dowman, K. 1981. A Buddhist guide to the power places of the Kathmandu Valley. *Kailash, a Journal of Himalayan Studies* 3–4, 183–291.
Dreyfus, B. J. G. 2003. *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping. The Education of a Tibetan Buddhist Monk*. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press.
Dudjom Rinpoche Jiktrel Yeshe Dorje. (Trans. Gyurme Dorje and M. Kapstein) 1991. *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism. Its Fundamentals and History*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2 volumes.
Dumont, L. 1966. *Homo hierarchicus. Essai sur le système des castes*. Paris: Gallimard.
Revolutionary Nepal 2009. In *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research* (EBHR), special double issue Revolutionary Nepal, n. 33–34. Autumn 2008–Spring 2009.
Ehrhard, F. K. 1993. Two documents on Tibetan ritual literature and spiritual genealogy. *Journal of the Nepal Reseach Center* (JNRC) 9, 77–100.
—— 2004. A monument of Sherpa Buddhism: the enlightenment *Stūpa* in Junbesi. *The Tibet Journal* 29(3), Autumn, 75–92.
Halbwachs, M. 1997 [1950]. *La mémoire collective*. Paris: Albin Michel.
Hobsbawn, E. and T. Ranger (eds) 2006 [1983]. *L'invention de la tradition*. Paris: Éditions d'Amsterdam.
Huber, T. 1990. Where exactly are Cāritra, Devikoṭa and Himavat? A sacred geography controversy and the development of tantric Buddhist pilgrimage sites in Tibet. *Kailash, a Journal of Himalayan Studies* 16(3–4), 121–64.

Huber, T. 2008. *The Holy Land Reborn: Pilgrimage and the Reinvention of Buddhist India*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Hutt, M. 2004. *Himalayan 'People's War': Nepal's Maoist Rebellion*. London: Hurst & Company.

Jamyang Wangmo 2005. *The Lawudo Lama. Stories of Reincarnation from the Mount Everest Region*. Kathmandu: Vajra Publications.

—— 2008. *Dancing in the Clouds: The Mani Rimdu, Dumche and Tsogchen Festivals of the Khumbu Sherpas*. Kathmandu: Vajra Publications.

Jerstad, L. G. 1969. *Mani-Rimdu. Sherpa Dance-Drama*. Calcutta/Bombay/New Delhi: Oxford and IBH Publishing Co.

Kohn, R. K. 2001. *Lord of the Dance. The Mani Rimdu Festival in Tibet and Nepal*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Krauskopff, G. and M. Lecomte-Tilouine (eds) 1998. *Célébrer le pouvoir: Dasain, une fête royale au Népa*l. Paris: C.N.R.S. Éditions et Fondation de la maison des sciences de l'Homme.

Lecomte-Tilouine, M. 2004. Ethnic demands within Maoism: questions of Magar territorial autonomy, nationality and class. *In* M. Hutt (ed.) *Himalayan 'People war': Nepal's Maoist Rebellion*. London: Hurst and Company: 112–35.

Macdonald, A.W. 1987. The autobiography of a 20th century Rnying ma pa lama. In *Essays on the Ethnology of Nepal and South-Asia*. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar. Vol. 2: 87–99.

Macdonald, A. W. and Dvags po Rinpoche 1981. Un guide peu lu des lieux saints du Népal. *In* M. Strickmann (ed.) *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of R.A. Stein*. Bruxelles: Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques 20: 237–73.

Mazaudon, M. 1978. Cosonantal mutation and tonal split in the Tamang sub-family of Tibeto-Burman. In *Kailash* 6(3): 157–79.

Namkhai Norbu, Chogyal 1992. *Dream Yoga and the Practice of Natural Light*. Ithaca/New York: Ithaca Publications.

Oppitz, M. 1968. *Geschichte und Sozialordnung der Sherpa*. Innsbruck and Munich: Universitäts Verlag Wagner.

Regmi, M. C. 1978. *Land Tenure and Taxation in Nepal*. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar.

Ricard, M. 1994. *The Life of Shabkar. The Autobiography of a Tibetan Yogi*. Albany: State University Press.

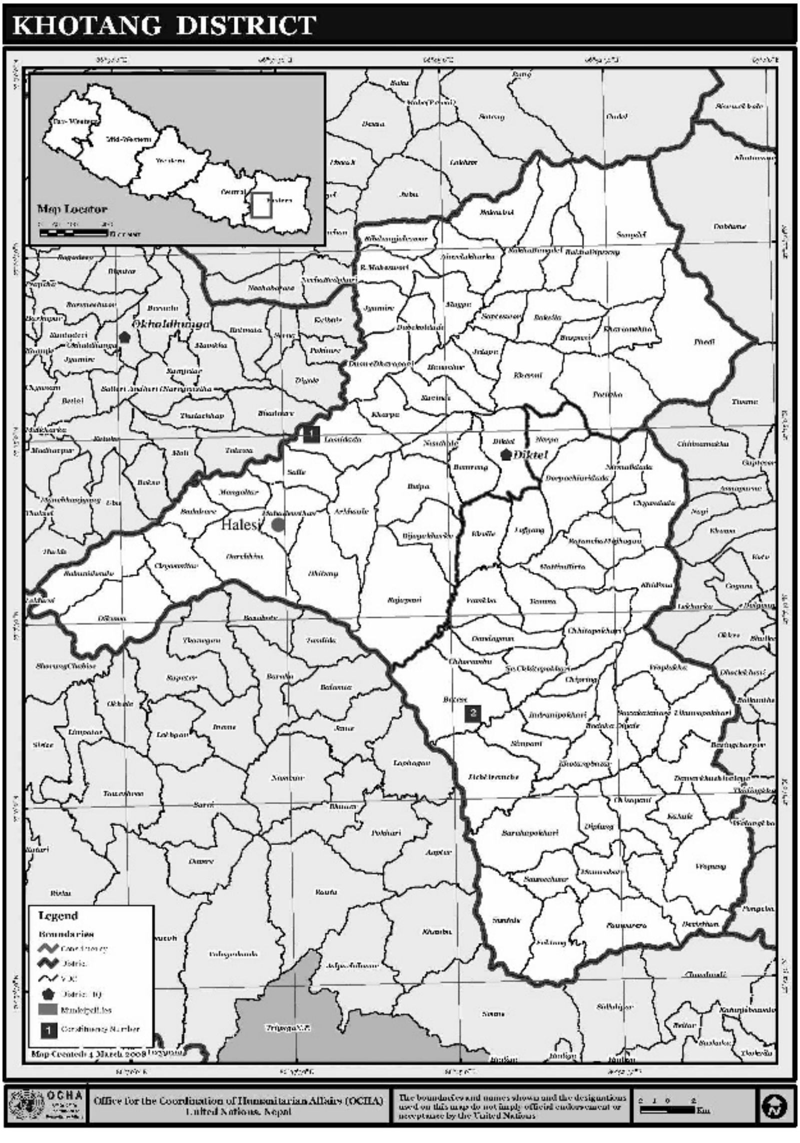
Ricard, M. *et al.* 1996. *L'esprit du Tibet: la vie et le monde de Dilgo Khyentsé maître spirituel*. Paris: Seuil.

Snellgrove, D. L. 1957. *Buddhist Himalaya: Travels and Studies in Quest of the Origins and Nature of Tibetan Religion*. Oxford: Bruno Cassirer.

van Spengen, W. 2000. *Tibetan Border Worlds: A Geohistorical Analysis of Trade and Traders*. London/New York: Kegan Paul International.

Steinmann, B. (ed.) 2006. *Lectures de la révolution : le maoïsme au Népal*. Actes du colloque international, Université Paul Valéry, Montpellier, 12–13 décembre 2002, en collaboration avec le CERCE et l'EPHE. Collection CNRS, Monde Indien. Sciences Sociales 15e–21e siècles.

Ström, A. 1995. *The Quest for Grace: Identification and Cultural Continuity in the Tibetan Diaspora*. Oslo: Department and Museum of Anthropology, University of Oslo.



Map: Khotang District, Nepal, showing location of Halesi (source: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), United Nations, Nepal)

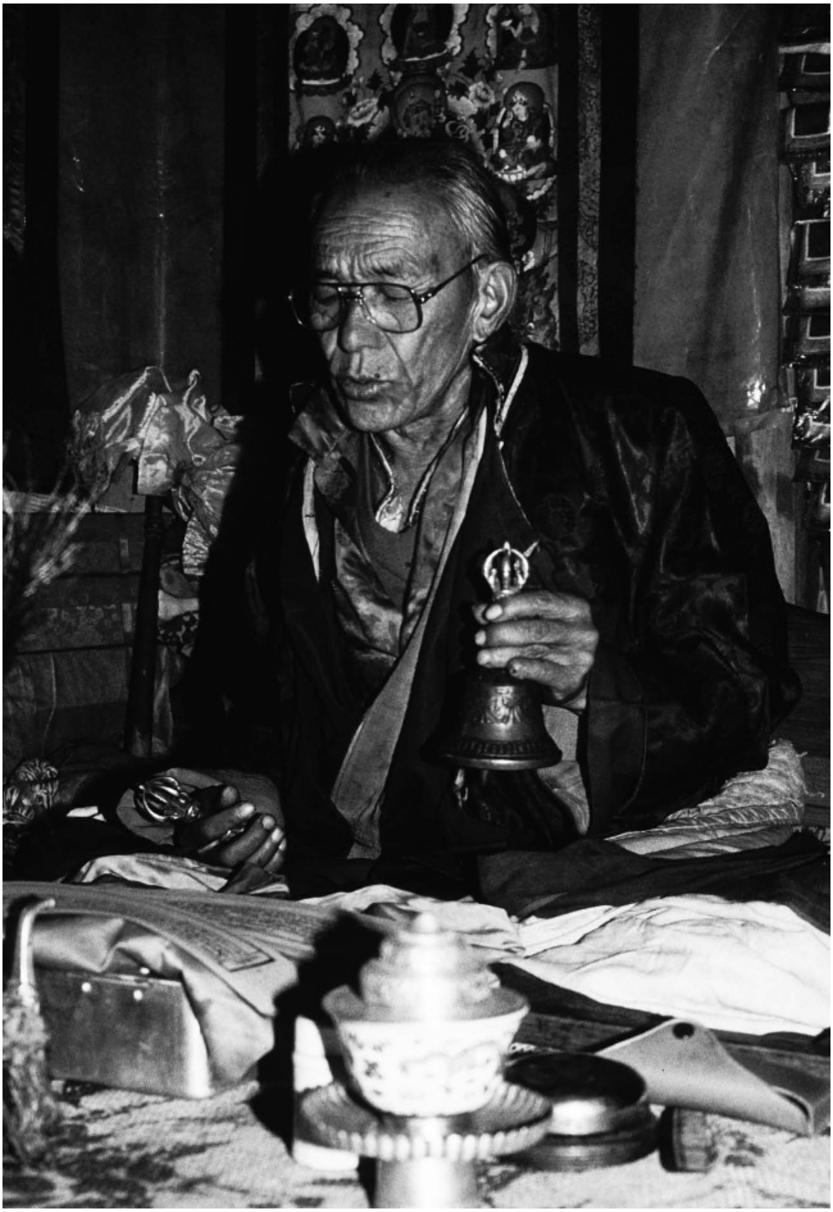


Plate 1: Māratika lama Nga dbang chos ’phel rgya mtsho (1992)

Plate 2: Karma dbang phyug (2007)

Plate 3: Bstan ’dzin chos rgyal Rinpoche, Māratika lama’s reincarnation

Plate 4: Mā ra ti ka 'Chi med rtag brtan chos gling monastery with the new retreat centre (*mtshams khang*) under construction (2006)

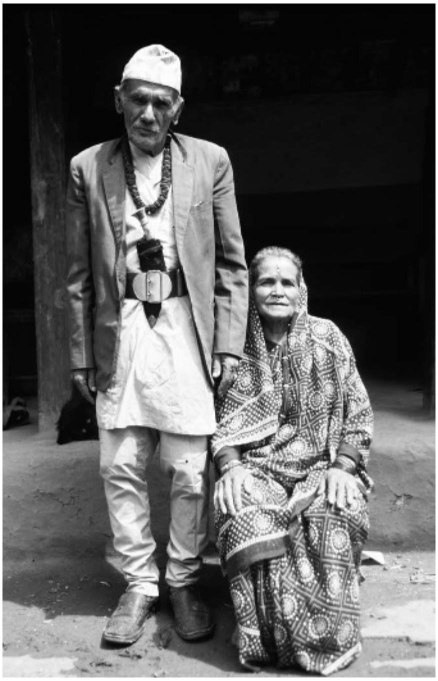


Plate 5: Bam Prasad Giri (1994)

PAST CONTINUITY AND RECENT CHANGES IN THE RITUAL PRACTICE OF NEWAR BUDDHISM: REFLECTIONS ON THE IMPACT OF TIBETAN BUDDHISM AND THE ADVENT OF MODERNITY

Alexander von Rospatt
University of California, Berkeley

This paper is not a micro-study of a particular ritual or set of rituals and the changes in their performance. Rather, I want to share some more general observations regarding recent shifts in religious, particularly ritual, practice in the Newar Buddhist tradition of the Kathmandu Valley. My starting point is a brief overview of the ways in which Tibetans and Newars have interacted over the centuries when renovating[1] the Svayambhūcaitya, the most sacred shrine for the Buddhists of Kathmandu. I will argue that while the patterns of sponsorship of these renovations changed in significant ways, this does not apply to the rituals performed in their course, starting with the deconsecration of the dilapidated structure and concluding with the reconsecration of the rebuilt *caitya*. By contrast, the sociopolitical transformation of Nepal since the opening of the country in 1950 has had a profound impact upon Newar Buddhism. I will examine the changes that as a result have recently begun to emerge in ritual practice. I do this because many of the forces and mechanisms at play here are not particular to the Newar

[1] I use the term 'renovation' in a broad, non-technical sense. I prefer this to committing myself to a more specific term such as those used to identify the seven "levels of intervention" that James Marston Fitch (*Historic Preservation*, 1982) distinguishes "according to a scale of increasing radicality," namely "1. preservation; 2. restoration; 3. conservation and consolidation; 4. reconstitution; 5. adaptive reuse; 6. reconstruction; 7. replication." As I explain below, the 'renovations' of the Svayambhūcaitya were major affairs, involving the replacement of the central wooden axis and the dismantling of the entire superstructure above the dome as well as its reconstruction with new materials. They were hence rather radical forms of "interventions." Since none of the seven terms as defined by Fitch adequately captures the case of Svayambhū, and since I am not aware of another technical term that would do so, I chose to use instead the unspecific term 'renovation', rather than opting for a more precise, technical term that would not fit accurately.

situation, but illustrate more generally how a premodern form of Vajrayāna Buddhism struggles to adjust to modernity, a struggle that surely forms also part of the changes Tibetan ritual practices have undergone since 1959.

As archaeological finds of Kuṣāṇa art bear out, the Kathmandu Valley, that is the historical Nepal, has for at least two thousand years been under the influence of Indic culture and civilisation. This influence includes its religious traditions, that is, since the latter part of the first millennium CE, Vajrayāna Buddhism and tantric Śaivism as well as other Hindu traditions. However, because of its location on the very periphery of the Indian mainland, Nepal was until 1950 (when the country opened up to the outside world) shielded from many of the momentous changes that occurred in mainland India. This does not only apply to the transformation of India brought about by British colonialism and the independence movement, but also includes the prior penetration of India by Islam and the changes of the religious landscape this entailed. As a result, many forms of religious practices survive in the Valley that have long since disappeared from the Indian mainland. In addition to Buddhism this includes archaic forms of Śākta Śaivism, such as the secret cult of the tantric goddess Kubjikā.[2] It would, of course, be a fiction to conceive of Nepal as a static place immune to change. The mentioned Indic religious traditions were shaped by autochthonous forms of religiosity and adapted to Newar society. Moreover, coexisting side by side in constrained urban spaces, Buddhism and the Hindu traditions deeply influenced each other—often blurring distinctions—and have many resulting commonalities. A good example in the sphere of ritual practice is the near-identical set of life cycle rites through which Newars of 'pure' caste pass. Furthermore, Nepal was not only exposed to Indic influences, but also to the cultures of the neighbouring people on the southern flank of the Himalaya, such as the Tamangs. Finally, reflecting its location along one of the major trans-Himalayan trade routes, there is a long history of interaction with Tibetan Buddhism.[3]

* * *

[2] Cf. Mark S.G. Dyczkowski (2001).

[3] For an historical overview of Newar-Tibetan relations see Todd Lewis (1989).

It is with one important facet of this history that I want to deal in the first part of my paper, namely the Tibetan patronage and participation in the periodically recurring renovations of the Svayambhūcaitya of Kathmandu (or 'Phags pa shing kun, to use the Tibetan name), the most important shrine of Newar Buddhism. Indigenous Newar sources as well as Tibetan accounts, such as found in *namthar* (Tib. *rnam thar*), *karchag* (Tib. *dkar chag*) and pilgrimage guides, document that between the thirteenth and nineteenth century the *caitya* was renovated in a major way, on average roughly every forty-five years.[4] These renovations entailed that the superstructure of the *caitya* above the dome was dismantled and discarded, that the dome itself was cut open in order to allow for the replacement of the massive wooden pole of more than twenty metres' length traversing the structure (Newari: *yaḥsiṃ* from Sanskrit *yaṣṭi*; Tib.: *srog shing*), and that the *caitya* was then—except for the better part of the dome—rebuilt with new materials. This was a very labour-intensive operation. It required the participation not only of a large number of qualified craftsmen, artisans and priests and their helpers, but also of hundreds of men to haul the massive new pole to the Valley—an operation that was normally spread out over more than a year because it is made of subtropical hardwood (*sāl*) that grows on the banks of the Trishuli Ganga and its tributaries, at an altitude some 3000 feet below the Valley. Besides labour, the *caitya*'s rebuilding required materials such as wood, bricks, copper and considerable amounts of gold for gilding the thirteen disks and the crowning structure above.

There was no endowment of land that could have covered these expenses and provided for the necessary labour. This is so because the *caitya* was not routinely renovated after a stipulated period of time, but only irregularly (as mentioned above, roughly twice a century on average) when the need arose after it fell into disrepair, and when a willing donor came forth. Besides, it would have been next to impossible to 'bank' the annual yield from endowment lands so that they would have built up over several decades into funds large enough to cover the enormous expenses needed. In the absence of a regular endowment varying

[4] For details see my paper "A historical overview of the renovations of the Svayambhūcaitya at Kathmandu", *Journal of the Nepal Research Centre* 12 (2001: 195–241), as well as my forthcoming monograph *The Svayambhū Caitya of Kathmandu and its Renovations*. Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute.

sponsors backed the different renovations and took the initiative to lend support or even initiate a renovation. Often, it is difficult to reconstruct the details because the Tibetan and Newar sources tend to portray these renovations as almost exclusively Tibetan or Newar undertakings. Indeed, on the basis of the former sources it might be concluded that the *caitya* is a Tibetan shrine, while the latter sources ignore the Tibetan participants or portray them as mere bystanders of little consequence. All the same, a careful complementary reading of the pertinent sources gives some idea of the distribution of agency and the scope of cooperation at the different renovations. What emerges is that there was no standard, fixed pattern that was replicated over and over again. Rather, while the principal agents were generally the given donors, often Tibetans, the Buddhist Newar community of Kathmandu, which traditionally 'owns' this shrine, and the king of Kathmandu, the person ex officio ultimately in charge, the agency of these three stakeholders was contested at every renovation and their role newly negotiated. The sources do, however, suggest a trend, namely that the Tibetans (who themselves had a varied background and differing school affiliations) often played a significant role as donors, and even instigators, in renovations undertaken between the thirteenth century (no such information is available for renovations performed before then) and the end of the sixteenth century. Starting with renovation commenced in 1591 the Newars started to take care of the renovations largely on their own. They did so in a concerted collective effort, with particular localities and caste-based communites assuming responsibility for particular parts of the *caitya*, for specific stages in the construction work and for the rituals on certain days of the reconsecration. However, this system started to disintegrate towards the end of the Malla era when the Valley faced the threat of Gorkhali conquest. As a result the renovation completed in 1757 depended upon the active engagement and material support of the Tibetan Rnying ma lama Kaḥ thog Rig 'dzin tshe dbang nor bu (1698–1755) and his students. Crucially, without that lama's diplomatic skills it would have been impossible to procure the *sāl* tree from the banks of the Trishuli river, which at that time was under the control of the Newars' great Gorkhali adversary Pṛthvī Nārāyaṇa Śāha. At the subsequent renovation concluded in 1818 the traditional Newar system of collective sponsorship had been further eroded. Instead a few prominent Newar traders with close ties to Tibet emerged as new sponsors who, together with Tibetan donors, shored up the operation and helped

to ensure the successful conclusion of the renovation. This trend continued at the next renovation a hundred years later, which was financed almost exclusively by Tibetan contributions and the funding of one particular Newar merchant who had made his fortunes in the trade with Tibet and China. At the most recent renovation, which was undertaken from 2008 to 2010 and dedicated to the new application of gold to the gilded copper parts that cover the *harmikā* and the rings, the exclusive sponsor was the Tibetan Nyingma Meditation Center located in Berkeley, California.[5] This renovation was motivated by the desire of a particular individual, namely Tarthang Tulku, to newly guild the *caitya*, and not necessitated by its disrepair. Hence, it cannot be concluded from the latest renovation that the tradition of Newar sponsorship for Svayambhū has come to a complete end.

As borne out by this brief overview of Tibetan participation in the renovations of the Svayambhūcaitya, the scale and nature of Tibetan sponsorship varied at each renovation. It depended upon a complex set of factors, such as the Tibetans' relationship with the king of Kathmandu, the size of the Tibetans' donations and their agenda and ambitions, the degree to which contributions were forthcoming from the Newar community, etc. It is noteworthy that the changes in Tibetan sponsorship and the resulting fluctuation in the agency they enjoyed at given renovations did not have a significant bearing upon the Newar Buddhist rituals performed at these renovations. Rather, the Newar chronicles recording the rites performed in the cause of particular renovations document that basically the same set of rituals was performed over and over at all renovations. They start with the 'journey to the forest', the *vanayātra*, undertaken in order to cut a tree for replacing the central wooden pole, as well as with the transference of the divine essence of the *caitya* into a water vessel and with other rites of deconsecration performed ahead of the building work. After most of the old structure has been dismantled and the massive pole replaced, the rituals continue with the rebuilding of the *caitya* by installing on each level of the structure a version of the Five Buddha *maṇḍala* in the tradition of the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha*. The rituals conclude with the remarkably complex reconsecration of the *caitya*, which includes the infusion with the divine essence that has been kept for the time of the

[5] Cf. Tsering Palmo Gellek and Padma Dorje Maitland (eds), *Light of the Valley. Renewing the Sacred Art and Traditions of Svayambhu.* Cazadero, California: Dharma Publishing, 2011.

renovation in the aforementioned water vessel into which it was transferred at the outset. The chronicles also document that through the centuries all these rites were performed according to the same prescriptions without notable innovations or deviations. In other words, irrespective of the sponsorship of a given renovation the officiating priests followed the same standard procedure that is outlined already in the *Kriyāsaṃgrahapañjikā* (probably late twelfth century) and related works. To be sure, the series of complex rites performed in the course of a renovation has never been reenacted in identical form. Rather, these rites allow for a certain amount of variation and digression, and accordingly details in the specific performance of these rites at a given renovation vary, reflecting the particular situation and historical context in which they are set. However, this does not impair the conclusion that over the period considered here there is an evident continuity in ritual practice that is in marked contrast to the vicissitudes of sponsorship and agency.

It is noteworthy that even at renovations where the Tibetans seem to have been principally in charge, the necessary rituals were apparently performed separately by both Tibetan and Newar ritual specialists, thus allowing for the mentioned continuity in Newar ritual practice. This bears out that, despite their intimate historical links and identical origins in Indian Buddhism, the Tibetan and Newar traditions have evolved separately, so that they have come to perform the same rituals in different form[6] and idiom—unlike the Tibetans, the Newar Buddhists have never stopped using Sanskrit as their sacred language for the performance of rituals.

Though very little detailed research has been done on the history of Newar Buddhist ritual practice (which is best known through recent anthropological studies), it seems fair to surmise that what holds good for the rites performed on the occasion of renovating Svayambhū holds good for Newar Buddhist rites in general: despite the changes in the fortunes of the Kathmandu Valley since the beginnings of the Malla era in the late thirteenth century, most ritual practices were transmitted without major changes. However, this picture of continuity has begun to change dramatically since the middle of the twentieth century when

[6] A pertinent example for divergent developments is the Buddhist consecration ceremony, which in the Newar tradition alone has come to include the performance of the ten (originally brahmanical) life-cycle rites of passage (*saṃskāra*). For details see my paper "Remarks on the consecration ceremony in Kuladatta's *Kriyāsaṃgrahapañjikā* and its development in Newar Buddhism" (2010).

Nepal opened to the outside world, and it is these changes that I want to turn to in the second part of this paper.

* * *

As mentioned, because of its peripheral location Nepal was never subjected to Muslim rule, nor later to colonisation by the British Empire, which—apart from the stationing of a permanent resident—did likewise not extend to Nepal. It should be added that until the end of the Rana regime in 1950 the closure of the country also sealed Nepal from the spread of western ideas of democracy, political freedom, social and gender equality, etc. that had gained ground in India with the independence movement. However, there was some indirect exposure to these ideas through the Nepalese who were studying or trading in India, notably in Calcutta, Benares and Kalimpong. In their circles, such western ideas took root and some individuals availed themselves of the printing presses within their reach in India to produce pamphlets and other literature that was circulated clandestinely in Nepal. More importantly, it was in the milieu of these expatriate intellectuals that the Nepalese Theravāda movement found the necessary support that allowed for its formation. However, the full impact of Indian-mediated western ideas, and of the reformist Theravāda movement could only unfold when the country opened up to the outside world. It is difficult to overestimate the consequences of this opening for traditional Newar Buddhism, and hence the momentous date here is not, as in the case of Tibet, 1959 but 1951, when the Rana regime and with it the country's isolation came to an end.

For a start, the collapse of the Rana regime allowed the first Newar converts to Theravāda Buddhism to return from exile to the Valley and operate without hindrance. The roots of this movement lie with a Tibetan lama commonly known as Kyangtse Lama.[7] This figure created a furor when he arrived in the Valley in 1925, having covered much of the way from Tibet by prostrations (*daṇḍavat*).[8] In the Valley he set up residence in Kindol Bāhāḥ,[9] a long-abandoned small monastic complex located atop the enchanting hillock of Kindol just south of

[7] For details of the life of Kyangtse Lama see Satyamohan Jośī's monograph [1990].
[8] See Levine and Gellner (2005: 38–41).
[9] On this monastic complex, see Locke (1985: 401ff.).

Svayambhū, where he started to preach Mahāyāna Buddhism. Many Newar Buddhists were inspired by his popular teachings of the principal ethical tenets of Mahāyāna Buddhism and felt disillusioned with their own caste-based tradition, which had long since lost the institution of celibate monasticism (see below). Among their numbers a handful decided to seek a supposedly more authentic form of Buddhism outside their tradition. After having first been ordained in the Tibetan tradition, they eventually made their way to India. There they were re-ordained in the Theravāda tradition under the tutelage of the Venerable U Chandramani, a charismatic Burmese teacher resident in Kushinagar, the sacred site where the historical Buddha had passed away. In India they also came under the influence of the newly established Mahābodhi Society.[10] However, just as Kyangtse Rinpoche and his followers had been expelled from the Valley by the Rana regime, so also the few newly-converted Theravāda monks were barred from the Kathmandu Valley by that regime, which perceived their teachings as a threat to the established social and religious order and took issue with their practice of collecting alms, which was alien to the Newar tradition and violated caste restrictions on food. Since the overthrow of the Rana regime in 1950, however, the Theravāda movement has established its presence in the Valley and, operating unhindered, has grown steadily in strength, so that by now it counts more than two hundred monks and female renunciants, and many more lay supporters. It recruits predominantly from the upper Newar Buddhist castes, and rather than challenging all of Newar Buddhist ritualism (the unsuccessful strategy it initially pursued), it came to offer its own alternatives to the major life-cycle rituals—alternatives that are less elaborate and expensive and more accessible than the complex and, to the uninitiated eyes, arcane rites Newars traditionally perform in the local tradition of Vajrayāna Buddhism.[11] In

[10] The eventful lives of these early converts are treated in LeVine and Gellner (2005: 41–45).

[11] For details see Levine and Gellner (2005: 65ff.) and Gellner (2008). The most prominent example is the *bārāḥ tayagu* rite, when girls, prior to the onset of their first menstruation, are confined for ideally twelve days in a dark room; cf. Gutschow and Michaels (2008: 173–87). A popular Theravāda alternative is the *ṛṣiṇī ishini pabbaja* when girls assume a quasi-monastic status and live for a number of days in a nunnery. However, I have not been able to confirm Gellner's claim that "the vast majority of Buddhist families" nowadays chose this option over the *bārārḥ tayagu* (Gellner 2008). By contrast, my enquiries in 2008 suggest that this traditional rite is still frequently performed, though the duration of confinement is often shortened to a few days or even a single night.

general, the Theravāda movement's claim to represent a more authentic form of Buddhism has gained much ground and come to undermine the authority of traditional Newar Buddhism.

A similar, though lesser, challenge is posed by the presence in the Valley of Tibetan Buddhism, which has grown dramatically since the occupation of Tibet in 1959 and the exodus of refugees in its wake. Again, Tibetan lamas with their intact tradition of monasticism and celibacy are perceived as representing a more authentic kind of Buddhism whose very presence challenges Newar Buddhism. The effect of this is felt particularly among members of the trader caste with historical connections to Tibet, who have always maintained some relations with Tibetan Buddhism. They readily view Tibetan lamas as an attractive alternative to Newar Buddhist priests and often commission them to perform such rituals as breaking the ground for building a new house or purifying it, though not rites of passage which are social in character and hence still require the services of a traditional *vajrācārya* priest (or at least a Theravāda monastic). A further effect of the recent spread of Tibetan Buddhism in the Valley is the mushrooming of new Tibetan *gompa* (Tib. *dgon pa*) and the increased encroachment upon the major sacred places of Newar Buddhism. To turn to Svayambhū as an example, the trend since the middle of the eighteenth century, observed above—namely the steady increase of influence of Tibetan sponsors—has gained dramatic momentum in the last ten years. Under the guidance of Manangis and with the wide support of Tibetan donors from all traditions, the base of the entire hillock has been encircled by a procession path (Tib. *skor lam*). Besides the prayer wheels, it is dotted with huge *chöten* (Tib. *mchod rten*), *lhakhang* (Tib. *lha khang*) with and without giant prayer wheels, Buddha statues, etc. At the western end, where it meets the ring road, the *korlam* (Tib. *skor lam*) has given rise to the so-called Buddhapark with three giant statues, which were completed in 2006, namely of Amitābha flanked by Ṣaḍakṣarī-Lokeśvara and Guru Rinpoche, each some twenty metres in height.[12] The new *korlam* has no historical precursor and effectively changes the face of the site of Svayambhū, with the base having become entirely Tibetan in appearance, while the top of the hillock with the *caitya* itself remains largely in hands of the Newars. This dramatic change entails the obliteration of the traditional sacred topography at the base of the

[12] The dramatic recent changes of the site of Svayambhū are the subject of an article by Bruce McCoy Owens (2002: 269–316).

hillock.[13] The Newar shrines traditionally located there have either been simply covered by the *korlam*, or moved, or have become inaccessible. It is tempting to construct this as an example where the Tibetan colonisation of Newar sacred space obstructs and threatens traditional Newar ritual practice. However, the mentioned shrines played a very minor role in contemporary practice, so that the new *korlam* only seals the loss of a particular cult that appeared doomed to perish anyhow. It would be wrong, however, to ignore the impact of the Tibetan activities and the transformation of their role from external sponsor to resident partial owner. Whether they just fill a vacuum left by the retreating Newar tradition, or whether they expand in a more contested and forcible way—a case in point would seem to be the (unsuccessful) attempts to construct a *gompa* on the grounds surrounding the ancient Cābahīl *caitya* to the west of Kathmandu, close to Paśupati—they undermine traditional Newar Buddhism and contribute to its sense of marginalisation.

The Theravāda movement and the increased presence of Tibetan Buddhism only have so threatening an effect because Newar Buddhism is under siege anyway. One principal reason for this is economic. Most of the land endowed for religious purposes over the centuries has been possessed by the state or misappropriated by others, thereby depriving Newar Buddhism of the material basis that traditionally secured the continuation of its cults and practices and the upkeep of its monasteries, temples, *caitya*s etc. This trend already commenced under the Ranas, but took a decided turn for the worse when the government put all non-private *guthi* lands under central administration in accordance with the Guthi Sansthan Act of 1964, and when, in a further particularly catastrophic step, transactions involving such lands became possible under the Guthi Sansthan Act of 1976.[14] The latter Act has facilitated the encroachment upon endowment land by both individuals and institutions, with the result that the landholdings under the Guthi Sansthan's control are constantly dwindling. For this and other reasons the Guthi Sansthan has been unable to raise the necessary funds from the lands under its administration in order to guarantee the continued upkeep of the religious practices that these lands were originally meant to fund.

[13] For details of the sacred topography of the hillock see my forthcoming monograph.

[14] A recent court ruling has tried to put a halt to this practice, but it remains to be seen how effective this juridical ban is. Cf. the article "S[upreme] C[ourt] halts transactions in Rajguthi land," published on January 24, 2008 in the *Kathmandu Post*.

This tendency has been aggravated by the fact that, in accordance with the Act of 1964, the Guthi Sansthan has to use part of the dwindling revenue in order to pay for its own expenses, including salaries. As a result of these developments the yield from particular endowments is disbursed in cash without proper adjustment for inflation, which means the *guthi* lands have effectively lost most of their value and can no longer pay for the purpose for which they were dedicated.[15]

There are two other equally important and related reasons for the crisis of Newar Buddhism, namely the exposure to globalisation, spearheaded by tourism, delivered by cable TV and access to the internet, and also mediated through the vast number of Nepalis nowadays working abroad, and secondly the momentous changes that have occurred in the last decades in the Valley, such as a manifold increase of the population largely through immigration, recently accelerated by the influx of refugees from the Maoist insurgency, urbanisation on an unprecedented scale,[16] etc. Traditional Newar Buddhism has always been an integral part of the social fabric of a premodern, caste-based society. It is a very strong strand, a strand on which much is centred and a strand that holds much together, but it is also a strand that is itself in need of the fabric into which it is woven. Hence, as the social fabric of Newar society has begun to unravel, traditional Newar Buddhism, too, is beginning to unravel and in need to adapt to a new situation where old certainties can no longer be taken for granted, and where new religious sensibilities and needs have to be catered to. It is the effect on rituals of the process of adaptation to this new situation that I want to turn to in the following section.

* * *

One defining aspect of Newar Buddhism is its accommodation to a highly complex and stratified caste system and the resultant restriction

[15] For a complaint of the resulting situation see, for instance, Dev Kumar Sunuwar, “Guthi land encroachment poses threat to cultures,” The *Kathmandu Post*, Oct. 20, 2008.

[16] The U.N. reports that in 2007 Kathmandu was the fastest growing city in Asia with populations of 750,000 or more. Cf. Catherine Donaldson-Evans, “Experts: World Population Will Explode by 2025 with Influx of ‘Megacities’ of 10 Million People or More,” *Foxnews.com*, December 20, 2007.

of access to particular forms of practice on the basis of caste. Most importantly, monastic ordination is a privilege reserved for male members of the uppermost caste, the *śākyas* and *vajrācāryas*.[17] However, in this tradition ordination does not serve as a soteriologically motivated act of renunciation, but, by contrast, as a rite of passage undergone in childhood (the boys disrobe only three days after their ordination) that confirms the caste status of the boys and binds them to society. Even so, since this ordination (which is known in Newari as *bare chuyegu*) makes the boys life-long members of the monastery and *saṃgha* to which they belong by patrilineal descent, it bestows upon them a permanent monastic status and the concomitant prestige (and by the same token obliges them to take turns as ritual officiants in the cults of the monastery). Within this caste of hereditary monastics there is a further differentiation because only a small subset is, again by the principle of patrilineal descent, entitled to the *vajrācārya* initiation that transforms them into tantric masters (or *rdo rje slob dpon* to use the equivalent Tibetan term). The *vajrācārya* initiation (*ācāryābhiṣeka*. Newari: *ācāḥ luyegu*), too, serves in most cases simply as a rite of passage that confirms the boys' membership in this most prestigious status group, but some initiates later indeed become practising ritual masters who act as family priest and perform rituals on the behalf of others.

Access to tantric initiation is, however, not restricted to these hereditary *vajrācāryas*, as there is a separate tradition of imparting secret (*guhya*) initiation into the cult of Cakrasaṃvara and related Buddhist deities of the Yoginītantras.[18] This far more elaborate form of initiation is not a life-cycle rite of passage that is tied to caste status. Rather, it is predicated upon a special religious commitment and accordingly taken as a matter of choice. It is open to all monastics and also to the uppermost lay castes without inherited link to monastic communities. Since the highest tantric initiations in principle require the participation of a partner, they are typically taken by couples and hence are open to women. They are not treated as mere consorts, but as initiands in their own right and receive esoteric mantras and instructions enabling them to engage as independent subjects in tantric practices. Accordingly it is

[17] For details see von Rospatt (2005).
[18] For details of this complex procedure see Gellner (1992: 266–81).

possible for women who don't have a (willing) partner to be initiated on their own.[19]

While high caste Buddhist Newars have traditionally enjoyed at least some access to the highest and most prestigious forms of Newar Buddhist teaching, the majority of castes have always been precluded from such practices. In their stead, Newar Buddhism offers a range of exoteric practices, devotional activities and religious customs that are accessible to all pure caste Newars. The so-called impure castes, the butchers (*nāy*) and sweepers (*poḍe*), however, are excluded also from most forms of exoteric practice. They may not participate in *vratas*, that is day-long devotional observances dedicated to particular deities and usually performed collectively in public at particular shrines. More seriously, they cannot enlist the services of *vajrācārya* priests, who perform for pure-caste Newars the rites of passage (*saṃskāra*) that structure and sanctify life. Even though they may resort to a different officiant to have matching rites performed, this restriction largely excludes them from the realm of mainstream Newar Buddhism. On the other hand, the castes considered impure have their own complex rites and traditions, about which little is known since they are typically shrouded in secrecy and have hardly been researched.

It is not surprising that the outlined restrictions of access on the basis of caste and gender have come under attack. Whether due to the teachings of the Theravāda movement with its root in the Buddhist Modernism promulgated by the Mahābodhi Society,[20] or whether due to a traditional indigenous understanding of Buddhism, it is nowadays commonly understood that the Buddha was opposed to making differentiations on the basis of caste. The perception that the caste-based

[19] My informal inquiries suggest that there is a growing number of singles taking tantric initiation, and that among them women have begun to outnumber men. However, the singles do not receive the three highest tantric *abhiṣekas* (starting with the *guhyābhiṣeka*) since these are predicated upon sexual intercourse and require the participation of couples, even if no explicit sexual acts are performed. (Though taking initiation collectively with couples, the singles are barred from witnessing these higher initiatory rites, which are performed behind a blind.) It is conceivable that the comparatively large number of singles taking tantric initiation is a recent trend, reflecting a certain popularisation of these initiations among the eligible castes. More specifically, I suspect (but do not have the data to prove it) that the strong prominence of single women taking tantric initiation is a novel development, in line with the greater role that women have recently come to play also in other arenas of religious practice (see below).

[20] For a brief portrayal of Buddhist Modernism see LeVine and Gellner (2005: 1–19), where the authors use the less common (but arguably more appropriate) term 'Modernist Buddhism'.

restrictions in Newar Buddhism are wrong is, moreover, strengthened by western notions of equality, which have become an unquestioned ideal underlying practically all political discourse and socioeconomic thinking in modern Nepal. However, the mentioned restrictions in Newar Buddhism follow from the structure of a caste-based society and cannot simply be undone by the stroke of a pen. Rather their removal is dependent upon a general change in attitudes and sentiments. This holds good in particular for the exclusion of the 'impure' castes. As long as they are considered as intrinsically polluting, people will feel reluctant to share religious practices with them, if only because they fear that it compromises their own status in the eyes of others. Hence, what we can witness as part of a concerted effort to vitalise and shore up Newar Buddhism is not radical reform and attempts to do away with caste restrictions, but rather a tendency to compensate for them.

The most interesting example for efforts to address, but not do away with, caste-based restrictions is the limitation of access to ordination. Starting in the summer of 1996, some of Kathmandu's most prominent *vajrācāryas* joined hands under the leadership of Badri Ratna Bajracharya and started to perform ordination rituals for candidates who are not *śākyas* or *vajrācāryas*, that is, members of the uppermost caste, who alone are traditionally eligible to be ordained. The targeted candidates include also boys (and men) who are not of mixed-caste marriages with one parent being either a *śākya* or *vajrācārya*, a group for which some accommodations have long been made. These new ordination rituals are performed as they are for *śākyas* and *vajrācāryas*, including the three-day period of monkhood and the subsequent ritual disrobing. Even so, they do not translate into membership of a historical monastery and its *saṃgha* and the associated status of monastics. In order to address this shortcoming and find a suitable venue for these ordination rites (which were first performed in one of the courtyards attached to Jhvā Bāhāḥ, one of the eighteen principal monasteries of Kathmandu) a new monastery with a *saṃgha* that in principle would be open to all was founded at Vairocana-tīrtha to the west of Kathmandu. However, the fact that the foundation of this monastery and its *saṃgha* was only motivated by providing a context for the temporary ordination has proved too little, and by all accounts this newly founded monastery has not become a functioning and meaningful monastic institution. Its *saṃgha*, the so-called Jinasaṃgha, seems to be largely a construct that exists on paper alone. However that may be, belonging to this *saṃgha*

can in any case not be compared to the membership in one of the traditional monasteries. It does not entitle and oblige the initiates to serve in the monastery as ritual officiants, and it does not bestow the status and prestige that goes along with membership in a *saṃgha* made up of *śākyas* and/or *vajrācāryas*. Accordingly, unlike their counterparts from traditional monasteries, the initiates of the Jinasaṃgha are not considered as eligible recipients of monastic alms (*bhikṣā*), such as offered by the Buddhist community on the occasion of the annual *pañjādān* and the *samyak* festival, celebrated every four years in Patan and every twelve years in Kathmandu.[21] Even so, the foundation of this new monastery and the (unsuccessful) steps to institutionalise its *saṃgha* are a serious attempt to compensate for the exclusivism of traditional monasticism, which itself goes unchallenged. (Incidentally, this strategy of setting up a new monastery is not new, but corresponds to one way in which the monastic Newar community was originally enlarged.) This new initiative to offer temporary ordination to Newars who would have been traditionally barred has become possible because it was supported from the beginning by some of the most respected and influential *vajrācāryas*, and because it does not challenge the established order of hereditary monkhood. Indicative of the moderate ambition, the new rite of ordination is in practice not open to members of the 'impure' castes.[22]

This new form of temporary ordination is likewise not open to females. This ban, however, does not follow so much from a deliberate exclusion of females from (temporary) monastic status, but rather from

[21] For details on *pañjādān* (which, though etymologically wrong, is commonly known as *pañcadān*) and the *samyak* festival see Gellner (1992: 180–86).

[22] Though so far a singular event, it is worth adding that in October 2008 a western student of Newar Buddhism underwent the *bare chuyegu* rite in Patan. A group of widely respected leaders of the Buddhist Newar community of Patan performed and sponsored this ritual and took care of its organisation. During his three days of monkhood, the initiant visited a number of Newar monasteries in Patan, where he was welcomed by locals and received traditional offerings of rice grains and coins. As in the mentioned case in Kathmandu, the ordination could not take place in a traditional monastery (which remain closed patrilineal units). Instead it was performed in Viśvaśānti Mahāvihāra, a complex that was constructed in the 1950s at the site of an ancient monastery called Gā Bāhāḥ, which had since long disappeared together with its *saṃgha* (cf. Locke 1985: 232). Viśvaśānti Mahāvihāra has no *saṃgha* of its own, and hence the foreign student underwent the *bare chuyegu* rite without becoming a member of a functioning *saṃgha*. Even so, to my knowledge this is the first time that a westerner has received ordination in the Newar Buddhist tradition. This bold move is indicative of a general softening of attitudes towards outsiders and the realisation that their support may be useful for strengthening Newar Buddhism.

the character of the *bare chuyegu* rite, which functions traditionally as a rite of passage for boys and not for girls, who instead have their analogous rite of passage in the form of the *ihi* ritual that sanctifies the girls and contains many elements of the wedding ceremony ahead of their 'real' marriage to a human. In other arenas of religious practice, there is, however, a tendency to open up certain forms of religious practices to females. A conspicuous example is the public participation of females in musical groups. What would have been unusual only fifteen years ago has now become a common sight, namely girls playing drums in public side by side with their male counterparts on religious occasions, such as the daily veneration of the Svayambhūcaitya in the month of *guṃlā* during summer. Another notable example is the recent innovation to have *gurumās*, that is, wives of *vajrācāryas*, recite the *Pañcarakṣā*. This sacred scripture is often recited as part of rituals in order to invoke the five protector goddesses of Vajrayāna Buddhism, the Pañcarakṣās. The recitation, however, is traditionally restricted to *vajrācārya* (and *śākya*) males, and it was accordingly a big event when in 2005 for the first time one hundred and eight *gurumās* publicly recited the *Pañcarakṣā* in Jana Bāhāḥ, one of the most prominent monasteries of Kathmandu, as part of the performance of the *saptavidhānuttara*, an elaborate protective ritual frequently performed in public (on which more below). While the wives of priests have always played an important role in rituals, they do so, with a few important exceptions, as assistants. Hence this newly found role as reciters of sacred texts (for which they practised for some six months under the guidance of Yagyamanpati Bajracharya, a prominent and influential priest on whose activities see the appendix) signifies a marked departure from established practice by putting females, in public, in charge of the ritual use of a sacred tantric scripture. However, this reform, too, does not challenge the established order, since it is controlled by male *vajrācāryas* and builds upon the traditional caste-bound role of their partners. Even though Newar Buddhism remains male-controlled and continues to exclude women from monastic ordination and priesthood, there is a real change in the opening up of some forms of practices for females from which they were previously precluded. This opening is different from the attempts to compensate for caste restrictions without challenging them. It seems Newar society finds it easier to show some flexibility regarding gender than to soften traditional caste barriers, which continue to be deeply engrained.

A final example for the slow opening up of restricted forms of religious practice concerns the practice of tantric initiation. There is a new movement to give lesser forms of tantric initiation to members of lower castes who traditionally do not qualify for the higher esoteric initiations. For instance, Naresh Man Bajracharya, another protagonist at the forefront of efforts to invigorate Newar Buddhism, initiated in 2005 a big crowd of several hundred enthusiasts in a converted movie hall in Patan into the cult of Avalokiteśvara and his six-syllable mantra *oṃ maṇi padme hūṃ*. However, while this unprecedented event used the traditional idiom of secret initiation, it only opened up a form of exoteric mantra practice that had been available long before to all, and hence it did not challenge the established caste restrictions relating to advanced forms of tantric initiation. This is a further instance where new forms of practice are initiated that compensate for caste exclusions occurring in other contexts, but leave the principle of such exclusion unchallenged. This approach is symptomatic of the reform initiatives in general. They are perpetuated by conservative figures of the Newar Buddhist establishment, and are not meant to challenge the existing structure. Rather, they are viewed as corrective actions that are meant to compensate for a defect of the tradition by returning to an imagined better, less corrupt past when access to Buddhist practice was supposedly more egalitarian. This way of advancing innovations in the name of a conservative return to a glorious past is typical of the way in which Indic traditions have always renewed and reinvented themselves.

* * *

A second major shift in recent reform efforts concerns the practice of rituals. These efforts do not aim to change the rituals *per se*, but instead address what is perceived to be a widespread neglect with which they are performed. This concerns in particular the recitation of the Sanskrit text to be enunciated as part of a given ritual. Normally (but, of course, not always) priests race through this text and in the process neglect to fully pronounce the longish Sanskrit words and compounds, a neglect that comes quite naturally as Newari is essentially mono-syllabic and has an innate tendency to shorten loan words. Not surprisingly, the recital of a text in this way threatens to become incomprehensible, but

this is normally not a matter of concern because it is commonly recited for its own sake as a self-contained ritual act and not because it conveys a particular meaning. Of course, this technique of recitation may at all times have invited criticism, particularly if its defects extended to the mantras embedded in the recited text. However, what is new is the systematic efforts with which some reformers of Newar Buddhism have addressed this and other supposed shortcomings in the performance of rituals. Most importantly, they have instituted new teaching programs in both Kathmandu and Patan that are generally directed at a new generation of *vajrācāryas* and train the students in the punctilious performance of rituals, including the well-articulated and un-truncated recitation of Sanskrit passages.[23] These training programs include the systematic explanation of these rites and their meaning. Related to these training programs, there have been numerous initiatives since the late 1980s dedicated to educating the Newars about Buddhism in general and their own tradition in particular.[24] These initiatives have also led to the institutionalisation of Buddhist Studies as an academic discipline at various universities in the Valley.[25] Moreover, there has been a profusion of publications on Buddhism in Newari. Besides innumerable booklets containing materials for practice, such as ritual handbooks (see below), collections of songs and hymns (*stotra*), etc., and besides numerous books and journals about Newar Buddhism and its history, there are also translations of major Mahāyāna works (*sūtras, avadānas*, etc.) from Sanskrit into Newari. Again, these translation efforts have their correspondence in the Theravāda fold where the major part of the *suttapiṭaka* has been translated from Pali into Newari.

---

[23] For brief notes on these teaching initiatives in Kathmandu and Patan see the appendix.

[24] For details see again the appendix.

[25] The teaching of Buddhism at a university level started in the 1990s at Mahendra Sanskrit University with Badri Ratna Bajracharya and Naresh Man Bajracharya offering courses on ritual practice (cf. the appendix). On the initiative of the latter, a department of Buddhist Studies was established at Tribhuvan University in 2000. It offers a postgraduate degree in Buddhist Studies. Moreover, in 2006 the Lotus Academic College was opened in Patan (again see the appendix). It is affiliated with Tribhuvan University and likewise offers postgraduate courses in Buddhist studies. Outside the fold of Newar teachers, there is also a Centre for Buddhist Studies, offering postgraduate (and undergraduate) courses, at Kathmandu University. It was set up in 2002 on the initiative of Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche (Chos kyi nyi ma rin po che) at his *gompa* in Bodnath, on the eastern outskirts of modern Kathmandu, as an independent unit of his seminary, the so-called Rangjung Yeshe Institute.

From the reformers' perspective their efforts to revitalise the performance of rituals and imbue them with meaning address what are perceived to be symptoms of degeneration of a tradition in decline. However, to my mind these efforts also indicate a certain alienation from the way rites have normally been performed as a matter of course, simply as acts carried out for their own sake. This alienation is rooted in a modern worldview as instilled by western education and perpetuated by the media, and it is also fed by the criticism of these rites leveled by people inside as well as outside the tradition who view them as outdated practices that are of uncertain religious meaning. Thus the reform efforts are also a response to external criticism and have an apologetic component.

The new concern with meaning also shows in other contexts. A good example is the performance of the principal rite of passage of boyhood performed for pure caste Newar Buddhists without inherited links to monasticism, i.e. boys who come from trader, artisan or farmer castes. This rite, known as *kaytā pūjā*, is largely modeled upon the upanayana, the Hindu rite of passage (*saṃskāra*) par excellence, which introduces boys to the Vedas. It is even named after a central element of this rite, namely the girdle (Newari: *kaytā*; Skt: *mekhala*) that the boys put on as outward sign of their new role as students. Even though the *kaytā pūjā* is performed by a Buddhist priest and embedded in a ritual dedicated to the common pentad of Vajrayāna Buddhas (i.e. Vairocana, Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha and Amoghasiddhi), the initiatory rites as such are only to a limited degree adapted to a Buddhist setting. Most significantly, the rites as traditionally performed do not entail that the boys take refuge in the Buddha, his teaching (Dharma) and the monastic community (*saṃgha*), let alone that they take the five vows of a lay practitioner (*upāsaka*).[26] Though not prescribed in the handbooks, this

[26] Although they do not take the triple refuge, the boys do at least worship the three jewels of Buddha, Dharma, and *saṅgha* as part of the *kaytā pūjā*. Still, this often happens only in a covert manner as part of the *gurumaṇḍala* that the boys are made to offer. Since they (and most participants other than the priests) have little idea of the content of the *gurumaṇḍala* liturgy, which is recited on their behalf by the officiating priest, they are not aware that it entails the worship of the Three Jewels at least in this perfunctory way. However, at times—for an example see the Bhaktapur practice documented by Gutschow and Michaels and the handbook they reproduce (2008: 235–36)—the boys are, in addition to the *gurumaṇḍala*, made to venerate the three jewels in a more explicit and extensive manner. For this they worship each of the three jewels by way of a *maṇḍala*. The configuration of the three *maṇḍalas* employed is standard. It is used for the same purpose of venerating the three jewels also in the ordination rite, the *bare chuyegu*.

has prompted *vajrācārya* priests to add to the *kaytā pūjā* the explicit triple refuge that is pronounced by the boys themselves and thereby allows them to actively express and affirm their Buddhist identity, just as this happens as a matter of course when the *bare chuyegu* ordination rite for *śākyas* and *vajrācāryas* is performed. This innovation is not only a further example of the new relevance of meaning, but also reflects the modern concern to clearly demarcate Buddhist from Hindu forms of practice, something which is indicative of the importance that religious identity has gained in the recent past.

* * *

The third factor transforming ritual practice that I want to deal with here is the trend towards standardisation. This partly follows from the newly set up teaching programmes mentioned above, but it is also, and more significantly, a consequence of modern printing technology and the distribution of the principal ritual manuals in the easily accessible form of printed booklets, a movement that was initiated in Kathmandu as early as the sixties by Amoghavajra Bajracharya of Gaṃ Bāhāḥ. Traditionally, a priest would use a hand-written text that he had either inherited from his forefathers or procured himself, or that he himself had compiled on the basis of other works at his disposal.[27] Since there are various junctures in the rituals that do allow for choice—for instance which *stotras* to recite in praise of the worshipped deities—this meant that there was considerable variety in practice, reflecting different preferences and ritual traditions. The standardising effect of the newly introduced printed handbooks is not an unintended consequence, but a clearly articulated agenda.[28] To its end these handbooks tend to be ceremoniously released in the presence of large parts of the

---

[27] For a concrete example see my brief description (von Rospatt 2010: 208, n. 26) of those ritual handbooks in the personal collection of the late Ratnakaji Bajracharya of Kathmandu that deal with consecration rites.

[28] Cf. Naresh Man Bajracharya's preface to Badri Ratna Bajracharya's Commentary on the Dharmasaṃgraha (2005: xxix), where he praises the effect of Bhadri Ratna's publications of "ritual instruction manuals" with the following words: "The publication of his [i.e. Badri Ratna's] works brought uniformity in ritual performing task at least in Kathmandu".

vajrācārya community, who on this occasion receive their free copies. The standardising effect of these handbooks is reinforced by the fact that rituals are often performed in unison by a team of *vajrācāryas* from different monasteries with the result that all participating priests, including those who prefer to resort to their own handbooks, make use of these printed versions. This new way of circulating ritual handbooks, therefore, allows their authors to gain much more control over common practice than they would have traditionally been able to achieve. For the reformers of Newar Buddhist practice this serves as an important tool to ensure the dominance of what they consider to be the correct way to perform particular rituals. Whatever the perceived advantages, this does entail a genuine shift in attitude. Instead of the traditional tolerance for variety and deviation in practice, there emerges a new standard to which all are expected to conform. It should be noted that the ritual traditions of Kathmandu and Patan are, despite their far-reaching similarities, still too different to allow for homogenisation. Therefore, the standardising effect mentioned above only applies to ritual practice within either the Kathmandu or Patan ritual tradition. Overstepping the boundaries between these two distinct ritual traditions invites controversy, as happened recently when a performance of the highest tantric initiation in Patan was criticised by a *vajrācārya* of Kathmandu as deficient, thereby inviting the anger of the officiating priests and other members of the Patan *vajrācārya* community.

* * *

In addition to the aforementioned three ways in which ritual practice has been transformed, I want to finally consider a further recent development, namely a deliberate revivalism in ritual practices that is motivated by the desire to invigorate Newar Buddhism. A typical example is the worship by groups of devotees at the twelve sacred sites (*pīṭha*) spread over the Valley. While this is a tradition that is already attested in the *Svayambhūpurāṇa*, a text dating possibly from the fifteenth century,[29] it seems to have gained new prominence in recent years as some

[29] Cf. von Rospatt (2009: 53–55).

popular *vajrācāryas* from Patan and Kathmandu began to perform *pīṭhapūjā* together with their respective students and followers, visiting a different *pīṭha* each month over the course of a year. A related phenomenon is the recent proliferation of the aforementioned *saptavidhānuttara* rite. While this has always been an important protective rite with a focus on the propitiation of the classical pentad of transcendental Buddhas,[30] in recent years this rite has been performed with great frequency by different organised groups of *vajrācārya*s not only in various parts of the Valley, but also at sacred places outside the Valley, such as Lumbini (where the final 365th such rite, concluding a year of daily performances, was carried out on March 6, 2001) and even Bodhgayā in India. It seems that the performance of this elaborate, non-esoteric rite with its hundreds of decorative offerings, and with the officiating *vajrācārya* priests dressed in colourful robes and adorned by traditional headdresses has come to be regarded as an ideal public expression of Newar Buddhist identity. A further, quite different example concerns the cult of the esoteric tantric deity Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa (the name under which Acala is usually worshipped). While this deity has always been part of the Newar Vajrayāna tradition, it has in the recent past only played a minor role in religious practice, particularly in Patan, which at present does not seem to have an active tradition of initiating into the cult of this deity. Apparently independently from each other, two *vajrācaryas* from Kathmandu, namely Naresh Man Bajracharya and Yagyamanpati Bajracharya have in the last years started to give initiations into the cult of this deity. While the latter priest confines himself in his activities to Kathmandu, the former priest has performed initiations also in Patan and Bhaktapur. Both priests do not restrict themselves to the mere transmission of the mantra, but also provide accompanying teaching that informs about the doctrinal background and introduces to the yoga of generating the deity in mental practice. This, too, may be viewed as a revivalist move because at least in the recent past higher tantric initiations did not include such teachings.

In all the cited examples (and in numerous similar cases that need to go unmentioned here), particular forms of ritual practice are revived and fostered with the explicit agenda of strengthening Newar Buddhism. This agenda is not only anchored in religious sentiments,

---

30 The *saptavidhānuttara* rite as performed in Patan has been the subject of a recent PhD thesis. Cf. Manik Bajracharya (2007).

but also owes to the fact that traditional Newar Buddhism has come to be seen as an expression of Newar ethnic identity. Hence, the urge to preserve and revive Newar Buddhism also has a political component. It follows from the perceived marginalisation of the Newars (a perception that has been reinforced by the huge influx of outsiders into the Valley in recent years, something that has transformed the Newars into a minority in their own homeland) and is characteristic of the ubiquitous ethnicisation of politics (*janjāti*) in contemporary Nepal.[31] To perform the mentioned (and other) rites with the deliberate agenda of strengthening Newar Buddhism is of course in marked contrast to the past when these rites were performed as a matter of course, without such ulterior motives. It betrays a certain alienation from these rites, an alienation that in its most extreme form could result in the "folklorisation" of ritual practice, when rites are performed for no other reason than to maintain a tradition with which one has lost touch.[32] To be sure, this point has not been reached. The mentioned revival and reform initiatives have arisen from within the living tradition, and it is, at this point, not the case that the rites in question are merely staged in order to enact a tradition that in truth has already been lost.[33]

[31] It would be interesting to examine whether similar sentiments of identity play a comparable role in the importance Tibetans tend to attach to the practice of their religious tradition.

[32] Cf. Toffin (2006: 71), where the author observes that the mask dances staged at Indra Jātrā express "a certain folklorization" that can give way to an outright "touristification," when the dances are solely staged for paying tourists. It is tempting to deride this practice of "touristifaction" as the commoditisation of a tradition that has all but been lost. However, as the case of the Buddhist tantric dances (*caryānṛtya*) staged at the Vajra Hotel, Kathmandu, and other venues shows, this would be too simplistic and ignore the aspirations of the figures at the forefront of such practices. They are typically motivated not so much by monetary gains as by the wish to preserve and revive traditional practices they identify with and deem endangered. In my opinion, Richard Widdess' study of the tantric dances and the modern practice of staging them for an audience (2004: 7–41) does not engage sufficiently with this aspect and as a result does not do full justice to the complex adaptation of these dances to a modern context.

[33] A first sign of the folklorisation of Newar religion and culture may be seen in the exhibitions that are organised with increasing frequency in order to display religious objects and other traditional Newar artifacts. A good example is the extensive exhibition that was staged in one of the courtyards of the royal palace complex at Maṇgal Bajār (as well as in the attached gardens behind) on the occasion of the Yele Mahotsava celebrations held at the end of September 2008 in Patan. The exhibits included a vast array of ritual objects, traditional music instruments, jewelry and clothing, as well as footwear and headgear, bedding, kitchen utensils, a wide spectrum of clay, metal, wooden and reed vessels, prepared food items of all sorts, artisan tools and products,

It is remarkable how important a role rituals play in efforts to reform and revitalise Newar Buddhism. Rather than being phased out, rituals are key and continue to define religious practice and sentiments, even after the advent of modernity and the exposure to the forces of globalisation. The early Theravāda activists experienced this when their criticism of Newar ritualism alienated many potential supporters, forcing them to offer alternative rituals instead of the rites they had first rejected. This is symptomatic of the continued great relevance of rituals in Nepalese society more generally. To give a prominent example, reference may be made to efforts to legitimise King Gyanendra's ascension to the throne after the palace massacre in 2001. In addition to the regular *samyak* festival, celebrated every twelve years in Kathmandu, an optional (*aicchika*) *samyak* festival was celebrated in January 2002.[34] This festival is dedicated to the cult of the prehistorical Buddha Dīpaṃkara and the ritualised cultivation of generosity. It accords an important role to the king as the leader of the civil community hosting Dīpaṃkara and the *saṃgha*. The last time such an optional *samyak* had been celebrated was after the overthrow of the Ranas and the assumption of royal power by King Tribhuvan. Just as then, so also in 2002 this ritual clearly served political ends. This is confirmed by the official news broadcast covering this event. It portrayed the king as Bodhisattva ruler who receives worship by the Buddhist community in recognition

agricultural implements and produce including an enormous variety of grains, fruits, vegetables and legumes, pulses, roots etc., and so on. The exhibition was hugely popular and thousands of Newars, dressed in the same clothes that were on display passed by the mentioned exhibits most of which still form part of their everyday life, saw an extensive display of the very life-cycle rites they still perform at home, viewed the live production of rice liquor (*aylāḥ*) which is still routinely made in the same way in their own households, and so on. The exhibition attracted hardly any non-Newars, and it was really for their own consumption that the Newars staged and celebrated their own culture. It functioned as an assertion of their identity (something that has become an acutely felt need in contemporary Nepal), but at the same time it also betrayed an awareness of their culture as something not naturally given, but special and in need of protection and preservation. While the Newars may view such cultural exhibitions as an expression of the value and vitality of their culture, they are, therefore, also indicators of a looming folklorisation of Newar culture and religion. To be sure, this folklorisation has not yet happened, but it looks imminent at least among a section of the better-to-do and more westernised Newars.

[34] A brief photo report of this optional *samyak* festival can be found in Tejratna Sindurākār: *Jhinidaṃyā samyak mahādāna* 2061. Kathmandu: Sugataratna Sindurākāra, 2004. The author also hints at the political context when he says that this *samyak* festival was staged in order to further peace.

of his role as protector of country and people.[35] Similary, in the fold of brahmanical Hinduism, a massive fire ritual with nominally one *koṭi* (= 10 million) oblations was performed at Kāṣṭha Maṇḍap in the center of Kathmandu. The political agenda accompanying this ritual was advertised on banners decorating and surrounding the ritual arena. Besides a large banner wishing the king's and queen's government success (*jaya jaya jaya*), citations of such mythical figures as Cāṇakya, the classical authority on statecraft, or Lord Rāma were on display. They served as a backdrop for proclamations by Nepalese kings of the Sāha dynasty, starting with Pṛthvī Nārāyaṇa Śāha, the founder of the modern Nepali nation state, continuing with Tribhuvan, Mahendra and the late queen Aisvarya,[36] and ending, most importantly, with a lengthy quote of the (then) new king Gyanendra, in which he declared it to be his destiny to make the Nepalese people happy, caring for their prosperity and delivering justice.

It would be easy to add many more examples that would demonstrate the continued relevance of rituals in the public and other spheres of life. What matters here is that, far from becoming obsolete, rituals have proven to be remarkably resilient. This, of course, does not mean that they are immune to change. By contrast, the possibility of adapting rituals to changed circumstances is precisely the reason why they have been able to continue to thrive and be relevant.

* * *

[35] Excerpt of my transcript of the official English language news that NTV broadcast at 10 PM on January 15, 2001: "… the religious *aicchik samyak mahādana pūjā* was offered to his majesty the king. It is also a special occasion when his majesty the king is worshipped as bodhisattva or incarnation of a Buddhist god. … Deemed that monarch (!) is the protector and source of inspiration for the people and the country, the Buddhists observed the *samyakmahādān* as per their tradition. The *mahādān* was observed wishing for peace, happiness and wellbeing of Nepal and all Nepalese after the interval of fifty years… "

[36] Of the kings of modern Nepal since the end of the Rana regime, only the late king Birendra, the slain brother of Gyanendra, did not feature. In his stead there was a citation of Birendra's wife Aisvarya. This choice may reflect a deliberate choice, for hearsay has it that Gyanendra and Aisvarya were united in their opposition to Birendra, when he ceded power to the forces of democracy in 1990.

I have identified four areas of change, viz. 1) the easing of restrictions governing access, 2) the attention to meaning, 3) the standardisation of practice, and finally 4) the deliberate revival and proliferation of certain rites in a conscious effort to strengthen Newar Buddhism. This is an insufficient summary of the many changes that have taken and are taking place, but I hope that it captures something of the way in which Newar Buddhist ritual practice has been fundamentally impacted by the momentous transformations taking place in the Kathmandu Valley before our very eyes.[37] The fact that the political vicissitudes and concomitant shifts in sponsorship in premodern Nepal did not have a similar effect on ritual practice shows how much more fundamental the current transformations are.

Tibetan Buddhism has to wrestle with many of the same forces and challenges, but it is clearly faring much better than Newar Buddhism. Paradoxically, it may be precisely the occupation of Tibet in 1959 and the resultant need to reform Tibetan Buddhism that prepared it already then for the confrontation with modernity and globalisation and now puts it in a far better position. Most importantly, Tibetan Buddhism successfully opened itself to the outside world and started to welcome western and other non-Tibetan practitioners. This has invited enormous patronage without which Tibetan Buddhism would presumably be struggling for survival, and this has also given rise to a new generation of learned practitioners who, though not ethnically Tibetans, help perpetuate the tradition. Compare this with Newar Buddhism, which due to its caste restrictions is open only to a small segment of Newar society and as a consequence does not attract support from the outside.

[37] It is worth noting that the archaic form of tantric Hinduism characteristic of Newar religious practices has been undermined much more seriously by the forces of modernity than Newar Buddhism has. Many of the Śaiva Śākta tantric traditions have already fallen into oblivion, and others seem on the brink of extinction. A decisive factor seems to be that while for Newar Buddhists the perseverance of their tradition is a question of their religious and social identity, this is not so for Hindu Newars, or at least not to the same degree, since they can adapt the *parvatīya* mainstream form of Hinduism prevalent in most parts of Nepal without putting their religious identity in question. Religious and ethnic identity are intimately connected in Nepal, and it is no accident that ethnic *janjāti* sentiments are much stronger among Buddhist than Hindu Newars, and, related to this, that Hindu Newars are more prone to abandon Newari as their principal language than Buddhist Newars are.

Appendix

Brief Account of Recent Teaching Initiatives among the Newar Buddhists of Kathmandu and Patan

The following is not an exhaustive survey, but a short, preliminary account that focuses on the main initiatives undertaken in the last two decades in Kathmandu and Patan in order to teach the essentials of Newar Buddhist ritual practice. It does not capture the traditional transmission between *vajrācārya* priest and disciple, but records new initiatives with some degree of institutionalisation that aim at a (slightly) larger audience and try to address the perceived weakening of traditional transmission and the resultant shortcomings in training and learning. I first deal with Kathmandu and then move to Patan. These are the principal centres of Newar Buddhism, but there are also active communities in Bhaktapur, Thimi and elsewhere, which I do not cover here.

In 1979 Badri Ratna Bajracharya (who is the most active and widely respected *vajrācārya* of present-day Newar Buddhism and since fall 2008 also the head of the Dharmodayasabha, a body uniting the principal Buddhist traditions present in the Valley) founded the Vajrācarya-adhyayana-maṇḍala in Kathmandu in order to train *vajrācārya* youths (a few students were also *śākyas*). This innovative programme was hugely popular and in 1990 led to the institutionalisation at the Mahendra Sanskrit University of a course on *bauddha-karmakāṇḍa* with its own textbook designed by Badri Ratna Bajracharya (*Nepālko Bauddha Karmakāṇḍa*. Kathmandu: Mahendrasaṃskṛtaviśvavidyālayaḥ, 1992). In the first year alone there were—according to Astamuni Bajracharya (1998: 76)—135 students enrolled in the elementary course. These numbers were obviously not sustainable, and nowadays the courses are no longer taught in this way, but have reverted to their original format and are taught informally at the home of Badri Ratna. Even so, there have been by now, in the words of Naresh Man Bajracharya, a prominent disciple of Badri Ratna, "hundreds" of students who have learnt at least the basics of *vajrācārya* rituals from the latter (see the former's preface to Badri Ratna Bajracharya 2005: xxx).

Naresh Man Bajracharya himself has become a leading practising *vajrācārya* of the younger generation. He joined his guru's teaching efforts at the Mahendra Sanskrit University upon his return from India,

where he had earned a doctorate in Buddhist Philosophy from Delhi University. With Korean backing Naresh Man has also set up an organisation in Kathmandu (JGO, Nepal Youth Buddhist Association) and another one in Patan (Paraṃparāgata Buddha Dharma Saṃgha), which undertake various activities for promoting Newar Buddhism, including supporting young *vajrācāryas* studying Buddhism, by providing them with a moderate stipend.

Though the focus is not on the technical details of the rituals that *vajrācārya* family priests (*purohita*) typically need to perform, mention may also be made of the classes that the aforementioned Yagyamanpati Bajracharya has been teaching since 2004. These classes provide more general interpretations of Vajrayāna Buddhism and its rites, often with a philosophical slant. They also engage with esoteric forms of tantric yoga practice, such as the so-called *trisamādhi* dedicated to the mental generation of Cakrasaṃvara. A particular focus is the teaching of tantric songs chanted as a form of worship, especially in higher tantric rituals. As mentioned, Yagyamanpati's classes are not targeted at actual or potential family priests, but draw a more aged, male and female, educated middle-class audience that comes largely from the *vajrācārya* and *śākya* caste, but also includes a few *tuladhars*.

Yagyamanpati's regular classes, which meet twice a week at a private home in Iku Bāhāḥ in Kathmandu, started informally as gatherings of his students. By now they have grown in size and momentum, and the name Bauddhadarśana-adhyayaṇa-pucaḥ (Buddhist Doctrine Study Group) has been attached to this initiative. According to Yagyamanpati, in 2008 there were sixty-eight 'graduates' of the thirty-six week course typically taught. Yagyamanpati has also introduced classes that are specifically aimed at young urban professionals in their twenties, whose western education may have distanced them from their tradition. By 2008 Yagyamanpati had taught two batches of such students, one of twenty-two and one of eighteen students. As alluded to above, outside regular classes Yagyamanpati has initiated more than fifty of his students into the cult of Caṇḍamahāroṣana. Recently, he has, moreover, begun to introduce a few members of the *śreṣṭha* caste (who are nominally Hindus) to the ritual practice of offering the *gurumaṇḍala*. The group of Yagyamanpati also organises performances of public rituals, such as the *saptavidhānuttara*. These may be rather grand affairs, as for example in the fall of 2006 when twenty-five priests performed the *saptavidhānuttara* at Svayambhū, and *sava lakh pañcopacāras* were

offered, consisting of 125,000 metal bowls (*gulupāḥ*) holding flowers and incense, and the same number of butter lamps (*devā*), flour cones (*gvaḥā*) and metal saucers with water.

The most important organisation currently teaching the basics of priestly Vajrayāna rituals in Patan is the Vajrācārya-pūjāvidhi-adhyayana-samiti ("Committee for the Study of the Rites of Worship of Vajrācaryas"), which has its offices in Nyākhacuk. The Vajrācārya-pūjāvidhi-adhyayana-samiti grew out of the so-called Nepāla-bauddhasaṃskṛta-adhyayana-kendra, which was founded for the study of Sanskrit in 1986 at Akṣayeśvara Mahāvihāra, Patan. In 1993, graduates of this programme established the Bauddha Saṃskṛta Vidyārthī Saṃgha at Nyākhācuk. It paid particular attention to the training of priests, which eventually led to the foundation of the Vajrācārya-pūjāvidhi-adhyayana-samiti in 1998. Its principal instructor is Buddha Ratna Bajracharya, who, charged by the Vajrācārya *guthi* of Kvā Bāhāḥ, had taught a first training course as early as 1978 and then a further one in 1990 (cf. LeVine and Gellner 2005: 254). For further details see the paper "Vajrācārya Pūjāvidhi Adhyayana samitiyā Paricaya" [Introduction to the Vajrācārya-pūjāvidhi-adhyayana-samiti] published in *Śrī Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Vrata Lumanti Pau* (2007).

The Vajrācārya-pūjāvidhi-adhyayana-samiti's elementary course lasts three months. It is followed by a second course of three months that introduces students to the most important life cycle rituals (*saṃskāra*). A further course, lasting six months, covers more complex rites including the remaining *saṃskāras*. While these courses are directed at young *vajrācāryas* with an inclination to officiate as priest, there is a shorter course for the wives of priests (*gurumā*), introducing them to the preparation of ritual items and the rites that they themselves have to perform such as the ritual welcome (*lasakus*). In addition to these courses the Vajrācārya-pūjāvidhi-adhyayana-samiti is also active in other ways in order to strengthen Newar Buddhism. For instance, it regularly organises *vrata* ceremonies, dedicated to either Tārā or Dharmadhātuvāgīśvara. These daylong observances tend to attract a large number of participants. Moreover, it organises performances of the elaborate *saptavidhānuttara* rite. The committee also coordinates group initiations for girls, both for the mentioned *ihi* marriage ceremony and for the subsequent rite of *bārāḥ tayagu* mentioned above in n. 11.

More general courses on Buddhism with a focus on the basic teachings of the Mahāyāna were offered since 1988 by Min Bahadur Shakya, with the aim to educate the Newars about the doctrinal foundations of their own tradition (cf. LeVine and Gellner 2005: 256–62). He did so under the auspices of the so-called Nagarjuna Institute of Exact Methods that he had founded already in 1980 with the purpose of spreading knowledge about Buddhism. This Institute also publishes the journal *Buddhist Himalaya*, monographs dedicated to Buddhism in general and Newar Buddhism in particular, as well as translations of Sanskrit and Tibetan works (often prepared on the basis of English translations) into Newari. Particular attention is paid to Tibetan Buddhism, which is viewed as a closely related tradition that is thriving in the Valley and hence has the potential to invigorate the Newar tradition. Moreover, the Institute has also administered the (now depleted) funds of the Taiwanese-backed Himalayan Buddhist Education Foundation, which were inter alia used to support the aforementioned courses of the Vajrācārya-pūjāvidhi-adhyayana-samiti and a closely related initiative, the so-called Vajrayānacārya-adhyayana-maṇḍala (it currently meets at Aki Bāhāḥ), which was set up in 2000, principally for instruction in tantric songs.

Though it is not primarily dedicated to teaching, mention should also be made of the Lotus Research Centre, which was founded in 1988 in Patan with Japanese financial support on the initiative of the Rev. Shucho Takaoka, an enthusiastic student and well-wisher of Newar Buddhism. This centre has published seven of the nine principal sacred Mahāyāna scriptures of Newar Buddhism, the *Navagrantha*. It also publishes a journal called *Palesvan* that is dedicated to particular aspects of Newar Buddhism. More importantly, the centre has been active documenting and recording Newar Buddhist practice, and a large digital archive (which remains sadly underused) has been built up in the process. An ongoing funding crisis has led to the Lotus Research Centre branching out and establishing, in 2006, the Lotus Academic College mentioned above. This College is affiliated with Tribhuvan University and offers evening courses in a newly-established postgraduate degree programme in Buddhist Studies (see Bhadra Ratna Bajracharya 2008).

It should finally be noted that among the Newars there are similar initiatives that have a Theravāda orientation. For instance, for more than thirty years learned Theravāda lay supporters in Patan have been

organising Saturday schools, principally for school children but also for adults. These are modeled upon the Theravāda Sunday schools prominent in Sri Lanka and Myanmar. Another example is the "Young Men's Buddhist Association, Nepal" that was set up in Patan in 1970 by Pavitra Bahadur Bajracharya, in order to reach out to the laity. Its weekly Saturday programmes, which feature talks and are dedicated to the practice of *vipassanā* meditation, attract both men and women of all ages. Though this association is principally inspired by and supportive of Theravāda Buddhism, it also lends some assistance to traditional Newar Buddhist events, such as medical aid for participants of the annual *matayā* procession, taking place two days after the full moon day of the month of guṃlā in August or September.

Bibliography

[author not mentioned] 2007. Vajrācārya Pūjāvidhi Adhyayana samitiyā Paricaya [Introduction to the Vajrācārya-pūjāvidhi-adhyayana-samiti]. *In* Gautammuni Bajracharya et al. (eds) *Śrī Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Vrata Lumanti Pau.* Yele [Lalitpur]: Vajrācārya-pūjāvidhi-adhyayana-samiti, 3–13.

Bajracharya, A. and B. R. Bajracharya, 1998. *Vyakti-Kṛti. Guru Paṇḍita Badrīratna Vajrācāryayā thaūtakayā jīvanī va abhikekha munā.* Kathmandu: Nepāḥyā Bauddha Dharma Saṃgha.

Bajracharya, B. R. 2005. *Dharmasaṃgraha of Nāgārjunapāda with Badrī Ratna's Bhāṣya, Part 1.* Edited by Naresh Man Bajracharya. Kathmandu: Tri-Ratna Publication.

—— 2008. Lotus Academic College: an introduction. *Paleswan* 24, 1–11.

Bajracharya, M. R. 2007. *Saptavidhānuttarapūjā in Newar Buddhism*, Ph.D. thesis. Aichi Gakuin University, Nagoya.

Dyczkowski, M. S. G. 2001. *The Cult of the Goddess Kubjika: A Preliminary Comparative Textual and Anthropological Survey of a Secret Newar Goddess.* Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.

Fitch, J. M. 1982. Historic *Preservation: Curatorial Management of the Built World.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Gellner, D. N. 1992. *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest: Newar Buddhism and its Hierarchy of Ritual.* Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology, 84. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

—— (forthcoming) Initiation as a site of cultural conflict among the Newars. *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Hindu and Buddhist Initiations in Nepal and India*, held in Heidelberg on 28th and 29th May 2008.

Gutschow, N. and A. Michaels, 2008. *Growing up: Hindu and Buddhist Initiation Rituals among Newar Children in Bhaktapur, Nepal.* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Jośī, S. 1990. *Kyānghyālāmā va Ṅondu.* Yala: Bodhi Prakāśana Kendra.

LeVine, S. and D. N. Gellner, 2005. *Rebuilding Buddhism: The Theravada Movement in Twentieth-Century Nepal.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Lewis, T. 1989. Newars and Tibetans in the Kathmandu Valley: ethnic boundaries and religious history. *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 38, 31–57.
Locke, J. K. 1985. *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal: A Survey of the Bāhās and Bahīs of the Kathmandu Valley. Kathmandu*, Nepal: Sahayogi Press.
von Rospatt, A. 2001. A historical overview of the renovations of the Svayambhūcaitya at Kathmandu. *Journal of the Nepal Research Centre* 12, 195–241.
—— 2005. The transformation of the monastic ordination (pravrajyā) into a rite of passage in Newar Buddhism. *In* J. Gengnagel, U. Hüsken and S. Raman (eds) *Words and Deeds: Hindu and Buddhist Rituals in South Asia*. (Ethno-Indology1). Wiesbaden: Harassowitz, 199–234.
—— 2009. The sacred origins of the Svayambhūcaitya and the Nepal Valley: foreign speculation and local myth. *Journal of the Nepal Research Centre* 13, 31–87.
—— 2010. Remarks on the consecration ceremony in Kuladatta's *Kriyāsaṃgrahapañjikā* and its development in Newar Buddhism. *In* A. Zotter and C. Zotter (eds) *Hindu and Buddhist Initiations in India and Nepal*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 197–260.
—— (forthcoming) *The Svayambhū Caitya of Kathmandu and its Renovations*. Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute.
Owens, B. M. 2002. Monumentality, identity, and the State: local practice, world heritage, and heterotopia at Swayambhu, Nepal. *Anthropology Quarterly* 75, 2, 269–316.
Sindurākār, T. 2004. *Jhinidaṃyā samyak mahādāna* 2061. Kathmandu: Sugataratna Sindurākāra.
Sunuwar, D. K. 2008. Guthi land encroachment poses threat to cultures. *The Kathmandu Post*, Oct. 20.
Toffin, G. 2006. Construction et transformations d'un rituel urbain népalais. *In* G. Colas and G. Tarabout (eds) *Rites hindous, transferts et transformations [Hindu Rites, Transfers and Transformations]*. Purusartha, 25. Paris: EHESS (École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales), 49–78.
Tsering Palmo Gellek and Padma Dorje Maitland (eds) 2011. *Light of the Valley. Renewing the Sacred Art and Traditions of Svayambhu*. Cazadero, California: Dharma Publishing.
Widdess, R. 2004. Caryā and Cacā: change and continuity in Newar Buddhist ritual song. *Asian Music* 35(2) 7–41.

RITUAL EFFICACY OR SPIRITUAL QUEST? BUDDHISM AND MODERNITY IN POST-COMMUNIST MONGOLIA

Marie-Dominique Even
Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique
Groupe Sociétés, Religions, Laïcité

From the perspective of Mongolia's religious history, the last century has been characterised by political upheavals that led to a radical change in the way of life of lay and religious people alike. Following a decade of theocratic regime and seventy years of Soviet domination with forcibly imposed atheism, Mongolia is today experiencing democracy and its correlate: religious pluralism. Surfing on the wave of globalisation, new creeds and cults have joined Shamanism and Buddhism, the two indigenous religions that had seemed forever lost in communist quicksand. Prior to addressing the issue of Mongolian Buddhism in its new surroundings, the context of its overthrow at the time needs to be recalled.

I. Buddhism and Revolution: the impossible combination

Barely out of its vassalage links to the Manchu emperors ruling China (Qing Dynasty, 1644–1911), North (or Outer) Mongolia[1] escaped Chinese occupation only with the support of Bolshevik Russia. Such an unlikely alliance with a state that advocated atheism was to bring

[1] I.e. Khalkha Mongolia. North Mongolia reflects the Mongolian denomination (*Ar Mongol*), Outer Mongolia the Manchu empire's point of views.

Note on Mongolian transliteration. Mongolian words are usually transcribed from the Cyrillic script first used in the 1940s, except for words that have a regular English form such as Chinggis or Jebtsündamba. Cyrillic letters х and ц are rendered kh and ts respectively; ы is rendered ii and never y, used for the yod. Palatal consonants ж, ч, ш are rendered č [ch], š [sh] and ž [dj]; з is rendered z and pronounced [dz]: the name of the first Jebtsündamba, Zanabazar, is pronounced 'Dzanabadzar'. For the Tibetan the Wylie system of transliteration has been used.

tremendous change in the deeply Buddhist country that Mongolia had become. The 'religion of the Yellow [Hats]' as Mongols used to call the Dge lugs school of Tibetan Buddhism, played a crucial role at both religious and political levels since the second half of the 16th century, to such an extent that it was a religious figure, the 8th Jebtsündamba khutugtu (1869–1924),[2] the most prestigious incarnate lama (Mong. *khuvilgaan*, Tib. *sprul sku*) of Northern Mongolia, that in December 1911 Mongol nobles and Buddhist dignitaries eventually enthroned in Urga[3] as khan of the newly independent Mongolia under the title Bogd Khan, 'Holy King', although he was originally Tibetan-born. Admittedly the first Mongolian incarnation of this Jebtsündamba lineage, the famous Buddhist sculptor Zanabazar (1635–1723), had been found in the family of a major Chinggisid ruler, the Tüšeet khan of Khalkha and, as such, enjoyed some of the political legitimacy associated with Chinggis Khan's heirs. In the years following the end of Manchu suzerainty, the Mongols' one and only purpose was to maintain their independence in the face of Republican China's claims over Mongolian territory that had once been part of the Manchu dominions. After expelling the Manchu garrisons in 1911–1912 and declaring independence, the Mongols, backed by Russia, were compelled to accept 'autonomy' under China's sovereignty by the 1915 tripartite Kiakhta treaty, a lesser evil but still a frustrating thwarting situation. Soon they had to fight Chinese troops that stormed Urga in 1919 to abolish Mongolia's autonomy. At that critical time in its history Mongolia found an ally first with the White troops of the 'mad' Baron Ungern, then with the Bolsheviks who were in the process of gaining control of

[2] The Jebtsündamba khutugtu (Tib. Rje btsun dam pa ; Mong. class. Zibcündamba qutuγtu, Mong. cyr. Žavzandamba khutagt), or Bogd gegeen (Class. Mong. Boγda gegen), was considered as the head of the Buddhist establishment in North Mongolia. On the successive Jebtsündamba's biographies, see Charles Bawden (1961).

[3] Ikh Khüree, 'The Great Monastery', renamed Niislel Khüree capital-monastery' in 1911, was also known as Urga, the Russian form of the honorific appellation *örgöö* used for the felt-tent of a high-ranking person, here the Jebtsündamba khutugtu. After 1838, the monastery was separated into two: the old part or Eastern monastery (Züün Khüree) and a new development in a quieter area to the West of the bustle monastic city, the Gandan (Gandantegčinlen), named after Tsong kha pa's Dga' ldan monastery established in Lhasa in 1409. The faculty of philosophy (Mong. *canid*, Tib. *mtshan nyid*) was moved to the Gandan. The Jebtsündamba monastic city was an economic and administrative centre as much as a religious one. In 1924, after the death of the 8th Jebtsündamba, the place became the official capital of the new republic under the name Ulaanbaatar, 'The Red Hero'.

the Siberian Far East. The political change in Moscow eventually compelled the Mongols to turn their national struggle for independence into a people's revolution (1921). From that moment on Mongolia was de facto submitted to the new Kremlin masters. The country had no revolutionary executives to implement such a revolution, and that task was partly carried on by Russian-educated Buryats who shared similar nationalist feelings and were eager to see Mongols reunited in a new modern Mongolia. But some of them as well as Comintern advisers and a few trained Mongols were simultaneously actively working at radicalising the new regime.[4]

Within the Mongol People's Party,[5] while all shared nationalist aspirations, indeed pan-Mongol ones, many were also upholding the Buddhist religion that had deeply shaped their life and culture during the previous centuries. For sure they found fault with the Buddhist institution and its monks and wished to have it reformed—and in this they were not the first, as some reformers from inside the Church had already started to voice their criticisms earlier in the 19th century[6]—but this had not altered their faith in Buddhism itself nor did it lead them to reconsider its role in the future Mongolia. Some of the founders of the Mongolian party had been—and some still were—lamas.[7] The most radical among them, and closer to the Comintern advisers, were those meeting near to the Russian consulate. To the Consulate Hill Group, as it was called, belonged the former monk and radical Buddhist D. Bodoo

4 In some cases the pan-Mongolist figure and the Soviet commissar were one and the same person, as in the case of Elbegdorž Rinčino (1888–1938), a Buryat who had joined the Russian Revolutionary organisations as early as 1910. Rincino guided Mongolia's revolution and until his eviction in 1925 was the Comintern representative, at the time the Soviet Union's most influential figure in Mongolia. See Baabar (1999) and the article devoted to him by Xavier Hallez (2004: 117–54).

5 Prompted by the Comintern, a 'Mongolian People's Party' (*Mongol ardiin nam*) was established in June 1920 and initially comprised two groups opposing the Chinese occupation that were founded in Urga the previous year. The adjective 'revolutionary', occasionally found in documents of this period, would be definitively adopted in 1924, along with the proclamation of a people's republic (*bügd nairamdakh ard uls*) and of a new constitution.

6 For example, Agvaankhaidav (1779–1838), abbot of Ikh Khüree, the *sngags rams pa* Šadav-Dandav (1829–1910) and the 5th Noyan Khutugtu Danzanravjaa (1803–1856), famous for his poetry, wild temper and free expression, cf. Lxagvasüren (1993: 79–116); Pürevžav (1978: 271–76).

7 The appellation lama (Mong. *lam, lam xün*, Tib. *bla ma*) in colloquial Mongolian designates adult monks, irrespective of their level of study and their ranking in the monastery, and not only a spiritual master (Skt. *guru*) as is usually the case in Tibet. It will be used according to its Mongolian meaning of 'Buddhist monk'.

(1885–1922), the lama D. Losol (1890–1940) as well as the half-monk, half-trader D. Šagdaržav (1880–1922). At the time, Kh. Čoïbalsan (1895–1952), a follower of Bodoo, who was to become the 'Stalin of Mongolia', was still a young translator who had spent three years studying in Irkutsk. Beyond the revolutionary phraseology introduced by the Comintern advisers, the programme of the People's Party mentioned no 'revolution' and talked even less about eradicating Buddhism. Inspired by nationalist ideas and advocating an independent Mongolia where Mongols would be reunited, it called instead for fighting the foes of the nation and of the 'religion' (*šašin*).[8] The foe aimed at in the programme was actually the Chinese Republic, that through a military coup de force had recently abrogated the autonomous status set up by the Kiakhta treaty. Evidence of the religiosity of the founders of the Mongolian party is provided by the oaths they took in front of Ulaan Saxius or 'Red Guardian', one of the names of Žamsaran (Tib. Lcam sring), a fierce-looking Buddhist deity especially worshipped in Mongolia that had been identified by the lamas with the epic hero Geser (Tib. Gesar), and by the visits they paid to the astrologer-lama and to the oracle of one of the temples in Urga in order to inquire into the chances of succeeding in their venture.[9]

In the years following the establishment of a revolutionary regime in 1921, the opinion that reforms were necessary at the religious, social and political levels was present not only among the political leaders but also within the monasteries, among some high clerics such as the Žalkhantsa khutugtu,[10] a respected incarnate lama who had agreed to

---

[8] The word *šašin*, 'religion', used for institutional religions as opposed to Shamanistic practices (*böö mörgöl*), came to designate Buddhism. In today's multi-religious context it is used indifferently for any religion, including Shamanism.

[9] The five founding members of the Eastern Monastery Group (also called the Civil Servants Group) swore an oath first in November 1919, then in January 1920 when the group merged with the Consulate Hill Group. The oath was taken in a symbolically significant place for the country and Buddhism alike: the Baruun Örgöö, shrine of Abdai khan (1544–1588), the ancestor of the Tüšeet khans of Mongolia, hence of Zanabazar) who had initiated the conversion of the Khalkha Mongols to Buddhism and built the Erdeni Zuu monastery. In 1912, the ceremony for Mongolia's independence took place in that temple. See Lonžid (1997: 22); Futaki (2000: 41–42).

[10] The 8th Žalkhantsa khutugtu Damdinbazar (1874–1923) had taken part in the fight for Mongolia's independence back in 1911. In January 1921, he headed the short-lived government installed by the Baron Ungern's White Russian troops in the name of the Bogd Khan, before he eventually joined the Reds. After the dismissal of the Prime Minister Bodoo for anti-revolutionary activities Damdinbazar headed the government until his death in June 1923.

head the new government, and the Darva Pandita.[11] The latter, a thinker rather than a political actor, believed that Buddhist tenets could accord with Communism and showed ready willingness towards the People's Party.[12] The Mongols, at least part of them, could thus picture for themselves an authentic Buddhism that would be harmonious with the revolutionary policy. This enabled them to reconcile the need for modernisation with their strong, deeply instilled, religious consciousness.

While such a drift towards 'pure Buddhism' was something quite new to Northern Mongols who till then had chiefly stigmatised the improper behaviour of monks and high clergy,[13] it was already familiar to Buryat nationalists in Russia. One such Buryat was Tseveen Žamsarano,[14] who advocated a return to ancient Buddhism, cleared of folk beliefs and superstitions, magic rituals and corrupt monks, and which would be named 'religion of Buddha' rather than 'religion of the Yellow' or 'religion of the *burkhan* [deity, Buddha]'. This longing for a Buddhist revival cannot be viewed separately from the attraction Buddhism as a rule aroused in Russia at the end of the 19th century, and from the Theosophical Society, which promoted a form of universal Buddhism better suited to Westerners. The educated elite in the Buddhist people in Russia could find there an upgraded picture of their religion,[15] which reinforced their idea that Buddhism could happily sur-

[11] The Darva (or Darba) Pandita is one of Mongolia's spiritual lineages of incarnate lamas (*khuvilgaan*, Tib. *sprul sku*), said to have had eleven previous incarnations in India and Tibet. The one mentioned here is the 6th Mongolian incarnation, Agvaančoinžordondov (1870–1927), a scholar and reformer. After the establishment of a popular government in 1921, the Darva Pandita was invited by Tseveen Žamsarano (see below n. 14) to become a member of the new Institute of Books and Manuscripts, the future Academy of Sciences. He declined the offer because of his poor health but wrote a small book on government rule, social organisation and relations between the State and the monasteries that was published by the Institute (2000: 33–35, 327).

[12] Bawden (1989 [1968]: 236–37, 269–71); Pürevžav (1961: 149). Pürevžav notes that the majority of progressive monks were to be found among the most highly educated.

[13] Pürevžav (1961: 141–49).

[14] Tseveen Žamsarano (1880–1942). This Buryat scholar had been trained in Saint Petersburg and was a strong supporter of a return to 'pure Buddhism'. In the first years of the 20th century he had been one of the main figures in the pan-Mongol movement in Buryatia. Deeply involved in Mongolia's intellectual and scientific life after 1921, he played an active role on the political stage until the leftist deviation in 1928. Expelled from the Party, he was sent back to Leningrad. He was arrested in 1937 and sentenced to jail in 1940. He died in prison in 1942. See Hallez (2004: 121). (Note: Tseveen Žamsarano and Elbegdorž Rinčino are known in Mongolia under their personal names, respectively Tseveen and Elbegdorž).

vive in a world dedicated to progress, albeit a communist one. One such champion of a revisited Buddhism reverberating all the way to Mongolia was the Russian painter Nicolas Roerich (1874–1947). He had a vision of the 'United States of Asia' where a blend of Buddhism and Communism would be possible. One purpose of the long journey he undertook in Asia during the years 1923–1928 was to promote locally the rebirth of Buddhism and to urge the Dalai Lama to purify the present faith and to acknowledge its new Western version. During this journey, Roerich spent several months in Northern Mongolia, from September 1926 to April 1927. He even published at the local printing house (a Russo-Mongol venture) in Urga two books in which he promoted his view of Buddhism as an 'accomplished Communism'. In Mongolia Roerich had contacts with Tseveen Žamsarano[16] who, together with political leaders such as Ts. Dambadorž,[17] defended a nationalist and pro-Buddhist line.[18] Within the People's Party most members were at the time declared Buddhist, if not monks.[19] The Party was provoking, with some success, a class struggle inside the Church. In 1925 and 1926, monks in the capital city rose up against the high clergy, demanding a fairer share of the monastery income and suggesting that

---

[15] Prince Ukhtomskij (1861–1921), a collector of Buddhist art and important political figure, encouraged Russia's Asian policy at the turn of the 19th–20th century. He was well acquainted with the Buddhist circles in Russia's Buryatia and Kalmykia, as well as in Urga. Ukhtomskij noticed that "the Theosophists' plea to all Buddhists to become conscious of their unity had been especially well received among Russia's Buddhist people". Cf. Laruelle (2005: 235–38). Local Buddhism and Theosophy had a reciprocal influence on each other, and D. Savelli (2005: 67–68) points out the strong impact that the years spent among the Kalmyks had on Elena Blavatskaya, the founder of the Theosophical Society (1831–1891).

[16] See Rosov (2005: 252–57) and Savelli (2005: 67–75).

[17] Ts. Dambadorž (1899–1934), a supporter of a liberal policy, was one of the important Mongolian leaders between 1922 and 1928, before being expelled from the Party as "rightist".

[18] Cf. Bawden (1989 [1968]: 282–87).

[19] Bawden (1989 [1968]: 260–61). During the Party's 4th Congress in 1925, Dambadorž, then head of the Party's Central Committee, declared that spreading an anticlerical ideology in Mongolia when the population was deeply religious would be a political error, and he called attention to the fact that among the over 10,000 party members, only a handful were not Buddhist believers (Batsaikhan 2005: 190). Even the future Prime Minister, P. Genden (1892–1937), who had been part of the Mongolian Revolutionary Youth movement, a radical organisation and a member of the Politburo of the MPRP in 1925, declared that same year that the world had had two great masters: Buddha and Lenin, see Baabar (1999: 322)

training, which was carried out in Tibetan, should also be provided in Mongolian.[20]

Among the high clergy, a different attitude prevailed, much opposed to the revolutionary policy but where the nationalist spirit of the period can also be detected. A number of these lamas envisioned a specifically Mongol Buddhism, calling for the "Northern Jebtsündamba Religion" and tentatively underplayed the dependency of Mongolian Buddhism on its Tibetan model, pushing instead its own specificity.[21]

Successive government cabinets took into consideration the impact of Buddhism throughout the country, including the Central Committee members, the high respect and devotion in which the Jebtsündamba was held by the population, not to mention the prominent social and economic role the Buddhist Church still played. Initially, from 1921 to 1928–29 they pursued a gradual policy regarding religion. The Jebtsündamba was maintained as the head of the new state after the 1921 Revolution, the office having been stripped of any real power, until his death in 1924. It was only then that the separation of state and Church was officially proclaimed in the new Constitution together with the new People's Republic of Mongolia. This was then reasserted in the 1926 law on religion. The separation was purely theoretical. In actual fact, while the Church had indeed been barred from interfering in government institutions, the state, as is well known, increasingly meddled in religious matters. The measures passed by the government against the Buddhist institution such as the outlawing of the *šabi*[22] status and

[20] See Bawden (1989 [1968]: 261, 269, 287); Batsaikhan (2005: 190). The project of developing a Mongolian form of Buddhism was not new. The Mergen gegen incarnations at the Mergen monastery in Urad banner (Inner or South Mongolia) had built temples in the Mongolian style, a mix of Tibetan and Chinese elements, and above all established a Mongolian liturgy (the 3rd Mergen gegen Luvsandambiižaltsan: 1717–1766). See below, n. 52. For an interesting discussion of the Mongolian or Tibetan character of Buddhism in Mongolia from a historical perspective see Elverskog (2006: 34ff).

[21] Cf. Bawden (1989 [1968]: 286).

[22] *Šabi*, lit. 'disciple', designated a specific category of the population, the ecclesiastical or lay serfs. These were serfs donated by Mongolian nobles to incarnate lamas. They kept on their pastoral life and had to pay taxes and perform duties for their incarnate lama and his monastery. A dozen or so important incarnate lamas were said "with a seal" and allowed to administrate directly their *šabi* within separate entities, whereas the serfs of ordinary incarnate lamas remained under the jurisdiction of their original banner. Serfs had no definite territory and used banner pastures. The most important ecclesiastical serf group was the 'Great *Šabi*' of the Jebtsündamba. See. Dašnyam *et al.* (2003: 42); Bawden (1989 [1968]: 106–107).

the cancellation of the rights monasteries enjoyed on land (1925), or the taxation of monasteries' income (1926), remained limited and were consistent with the much-needed social modernisation of Mongolia. Despite collateral anticlerical propaganda by the Party, picturing rapacious and big-bellied monks, those measures did not seriously weaken the influence of Buddhism and monasteries, nor did they undermine the loyalty the lay public displayed towards their lamas.

This policy, however, was enough to trigger wide discontent among the new regime. From monasteries scary stories spread about Russian or Mongolian 'Reds' ready to kill their own parents and defile sacred scriptures, and whose leader was said to be the reincarnation of the evil Glang dar ma, the Tibetan king who is widely regarded as an oppressor of Buddhism.[23] Monks predicted disasters would befall the new regime and its supporters while promising important spiritual benefits to whoever was faithful to Buddhism and helped diffuse religious propaganda. Anxious to restore the former system, part of the clergy sought support from the Panchen-Lama and Japan.[24] In the course of the 1920s, plots and riots were set up by clerics more or less associated with the local gentry.

For several years the new regime pursued for this relatively mild approach in dealing with the Buddhist institution, to the extent that some revolutionary monks urging for more democracy in their monastery in Urga did not always get the support they might have expected from the People's Party. As to finding the new incarnation of the Jebtsündamba, since the death of the 8th incumbent in 1924, this was regularly delayed and definitively forbidden only in 1929.[25]

---

[23] Although this king is presented in Buddhist historiography as a brutal persecutor of Buddhism during the 9th century, and is held responsible for its eclipse, some recent publications (see Yamaguchi 1996; Karmay 2003) indicate that in reality he showed interest in Buddhism, yet opposed the meddling of monks in political affairs and the previous privileges they had been granted (I would like to thank K. Buffetrille for mentioning these new elements to me).

[24] Bawden (1989 [1968]: 266).

[25] Following the 8th Jebtsündamba's death, the Mongolian Buddhist establishment identified his next incarnation in a Mongolian child from the Bogd khan uul province. The Mongolian government refused to have him recognised, alleging the lack of evidence. In 1926, during the 5th congress, the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party based its refusal for finding the new incarnation on a popular belief according to which the 8th will be reborn in the Shambala paradise. Three years after, on the 15th of February 1929, a government decree forbade the search of any incarnation whatsoever, Bawden (1989 [1968]: 262–63). According to an article by B.-O. Galaarid that was published in a daily newspaper (*Önöödör*, 4/07/2005), preparations had been made at

That same year a turnabout in the policy of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP) was decided during the 7th Congress, instigated by the Soviet representatives. This drastic move brought about the removal from the Party of its more moderate leaders. Yet important figures such as Tseveen Žamsarano and Dambadorž had been working at conciliating the Party's targets with a renewed, "scientific"[26] Buddhism and were willing to maintain a reformist approach to economic problems in line with the New Economic Policy in the Soviet Union and its motto "Get rich!" (Mong. *bayažigtun*!). They had been waiting for a new incarnation of the Jebtsündamba to be found in Mongolia and were expressing their fear of Soviet imperialism.[27] But the Party instead adopted the motion defended by the Comintern agent in Urga, B. Šmeral, who recommended that the country proceed directly from a feudal system to socialism without going through the capitalist stage.[28]

In 1929, at the following 8th Congress, the idea of a reformed Buddhism was more firmly condemned. As a matter of fact, a politically acceptable Buddhism would have been a more tricky opponent for the Party than bluntly conservative lamas. From that year onwards, the MPRP acted in order to undermine the economic and ideological foundations of the former dominant social group which included many Church dignitaries and incarnate lamas, the former objects of popular worship as well as owners of private and monastic estates. A violent campaign was launched to seize the dominant group's properties and livestock, combined with forced collectivisation. Specific measures were aimed at monasteries, requiring them to pay their herdsmen and increasing their taxes, imposing compensation for military service whatever the age of the monk, forbidding families to send children under 18 years of age and only sons to monasteries as novices, obliging

---

the beginning of 1928 in the region where the child had been found in view of enthroning the new Jebtsündamba, but the communist authorities stopped the project and arrested those responsible. A few years later, in 1932, the Tibetan establishment identified the 9th Jebtsündamba in Lhasa, in a house close to the Jokhang, and the Dalai Lama recognised him. His status in Mongolia today remains controversial. See Sanders (2001: 273–303).

[26] In the opinion of Tseveen Žamsarano, "[...] what religion and the Buddhist scriptures teach...is in full accordance with science", quoted by Pürevžav and Dašžamts (1965: 113–17).

[27] Bawden (1989 [1968]: 284–85, 292).

[28] Batsaikhan (2005: 195).

monks to attend political classes and urging them to give up the cloth.[29] As had been predicted by moderates, this kind of a policy produced more radical opposition from the Church and led to the general uprising of Spring 1932 against the communist government, with monasteries as the main—although not the exclusive—driving force. The revolt was sparked in Khialganat monastery in the north, not far from lake Khövsgöl, and spread rapidly to the neighbouring provinces. The 'yellow troops', made up of monks and laymen and including former monks who had been impelled to defrock, were defeated only with the help of the Soviet army, with the aid of aircraft.[30]

After the dramatic failure of the leftist deviation, adjustments were made to government policy (1932–1934). Aberrations generated by the leftist deviation were corrected and the collectivisation process stopped. Guidance of Mongolian politics shifted from the Comintern to Stalin, who held regular talks with Mongolian leaders during the years 1933–1936. Monasteries had suffered economically but their social and ideological influence nevertheless remained strong. The government went on fighting the Church, using taxes as the main weapon. Between 1932 and 1936, ecclesiastical livestock was decreased by one third. Besides this, the government developed secular education and encouraged the monks, who were taught only Tibetan at their monasteries, to learn the Mongolian script. This topic, as well as the use of Mongolian in Buddhist liturgy, was discussed during the meetings with Stalin in Moscow in November 1934 and then in December 1935–January 1936. He strongly recommended that in the future the national language be used in worship, a step many Mongols—the head of state Amar, among others, according to Genden—were unwilling to make. In 1936 the government eventually brought out a journal specifically intended to publicise its policy in monasteries, *The Lama's Journal*, written in Mongolian using both Mongolian and Tibetan scripts.[31] From 1934 onwards the Party had been placing permanent representatives in major monasteries to monitor the loyalty of the monks. A new law on the separation of Church and state was adopted at the end of 1934, more

---

29 Pürevžav and Daszamts (1965: 120–31, 172).

30 Batsaikhan (2005: 215–18).

31 Some issues of this journal, written in Mongolian using both Tibetan and Mongolian script, have been reprinted by the Mongolia Society: see Grivelet (2001). See also Šinkarev (2006: 130–31, 133).

restrictive than the 1926 law.[32] Yet, in spite of the government's efforts to turn the laity away from Buddhism and its achievement in limiting the enrollment of novices in monasteries, the Church was still functioning and Stalin was not satisfied. When he met the Mongolian Prime Minister Genden[33] in 1934 and then again in 1935–1936, he vented his displeasure at the Mongols' incapacity to solve once and for all the religious question and put an end to what he named "a state within the state", pointing out that the lamas' government" was more powerful than Genden's own and blaming the latter for giving in to lamas and failing to understand that these were enemies.[34] Genden, in his own way, although seriously involved in the left-turn failure, seemed to share the Mongolian propensity to combine the national faith with the Revolution instead of seeing the two as irreconcilable. Namsrai, the Internal Security minister, himself criticised on these occasions for being too lenient with counter-revolutionary lamas, acknowledged that the political struggle against lamas was quite difficult as some officials, heads of district and even Party members were still devout Buddhists.[35] Admittedly, on the eve of the 1937–38 liquidation of the Buddhist Church, Mongolia had 583 monasteries (according to Genden's declaration to Stalin in January 1936, 99 were considered big monasteries), as well as 260 temples and shrines: altogether there were some six thousand religious buildings. As for monks, there were about 80,000 of them: that is to say one in ten Mongols was a monk.[36]

The great purges of 1937–1939 were organised in Mongolia with the close support of the NKVD, on the pattern of the Great Terror in Russia. While the victims were not all picked for their religious stance, but also for political, ethnic, and other reasons, institutional and clerical Buddhism was inflicted a lethal and lasting blow. The violence ended in the near-complete destruction of its educated elite, of its places of worship, and of its cultural and artistic heritage. The surviving monks, of lower rank, were forced to renounce their vows and to marry or join the army. On top of the fresh ruins of Buddhism, the government was finally able to establish, at least formally, an atheistic soci-

[32] Pürevžav and Daššamts (1965: 168, 172–73, 180, 192, 195, 197–98).

[33] See above, n. 19. Genden would be eliminated by the Soviets. Retained in Russia in 1936, he was arrested and sentenced to death in Moscow the following year.

[34] Leonid I. Šinkarev (2006: 128–51, 146, 148).

[35] Baabar (1999: 322); Pürevžav and Daššamts (1965: 202–203).

[36] Pürevžavand Daššamts (1965: 165–66); Šinkarev (2006: 150).

ety without meeting any open resistance, or the use of further large-scale violence.

After the Second World War, in 1944, what was left of the Gandantegčinlen monastery in Ulaanbaatar was allowed to reopen, following the request of Mongolian soldiers backed by their Soviet general,[37] and probably also in order to demonstrate that Mongolia's new regime respected religious freedom, at a time when the country's recognition by the international community was on the agenda. A handful of selected monks were allowed to carry out an abridged version of the complex Buddhist liturgy under close supervision, and encouraged to use Mongolian. While no other temple was ever allowed to open elsewhere in the country or in the capital until the collapse of the Soviet Union, a Buddhist school was built next to the Gandan in 1970, where the needed future monks could be trained. During the communist era, old people, especially shaved old women who had taken the basic vows, were the most regular visitors, but on the eve of Tsagaan sar (New Year's eve), a traditional festivity which townspeople were no longer supposed to celebrate, the main temple would be crowded with people of all ages and backgrounds. Privately, laypeople used to invite former monks into their home to read prayers, draw horoscopes for family members and perform basic healing rituals, either on a regular basis or in case of illness or some other trouble. Some, as Vesna Wallace relates, would also assemble at one or another's home to discuss Buddhist doctrinal tenets.[38] Thus a certain amount of religious activity went on behind closed doors. And as soon as the communist era ended in 1990, old surviving monks resumed their clerical life, often in a temple-yurt, joined by young novices or retired people, as if the previous decades had been but a short eclipse. Even so, these years of religious deprivation have left their mark.

II. The Religious Revival of the Transition years

The establishment of political pluralism in Mongolia in 1990 came with a display of strong nationalist and religious feelings. Freedom of reli-

[37] Wallace (2008: 46).

[38] *Ibid.* People involved in such gatherings were probably intellectuals or monks themselves. See also Teleki (2009: 68).

gion, a reality as early as 1990, was guaranteed by the new Constitution (1992).[39]

On the one hand, Buddhism,[40] Shamanism and the heroic figure of Chinggis Khan, founder of the Mongolian state and mirror of its glorious past, acted as the three major sources from which post-communist Mongols—be they individuals, institutions or the state—drew on in order to display their specificity as a nation, something that had been very much toned down by the communist government.[41] On the other hand, globalisation contributed to the extent and the speed with which Mongolia opened up to the outside world. As a consequence of the free circulation of people and ideas local values now have to compete with new sets of values. As far as our topic here is concerned, Mongolia became the destination for an impressive number of missionaries, mostly Christian, who were, and still are, eager to make up for the lost years, as much in Manchu times as during the Soviet era, when they were forbidden access to Northern (Outer) Mongolia.[42] The vast majority of them are Protestants of various denominations. Active, if not aggressive, proselytisers, they boast many converts. In 1999 seventeen such denominations were officially registered—Baptists, Evangelicals, Seventh-Day Adventists, Mormons, and so on—out of twenty-nine religious organisations. By comparison, representatives of Roman Catholicism, priests and nuns, are few, but they enjoy a privileged position. Successors of the Franciscan envoys sent by the Pope or by European kings to the Mongol khans in the 13th century, they are connected with Mongolia's most triumphant period, and what is more, they benefit from official relations between the new democratic Mongolia and the Holy See. Although they have an imposing church in

---

[39] *Mongol ulsiin ündsen khuuli* [The Constitution of Mongolia] (1992: see in particular article 16, §15 and 19, §2).

[40] Very detailed research on the revival of Buddhism and on the current monastic situation in Mongolia has been conducted since 1999 by two Hungarian scholars, Zsuzsa Majer and Krisztina Teleki; part of their fieldwork and interviews was made in the framework of the Documentation on Mongolian Monasteries project of the Arts Council of Mongolia: www.mongoliantemples.net: see Majer (2009) and Teleki (2009).

[41] Cf. Aubin (1996: 305–26); Hamayon (*ibid.*: 327–58).

[42] Up to that time only one Belgian Catholic mission (in Inner Mongolia) and a few missionaries sent by the London Missionary Society (in Buryatia) had been able to propagate Christianity among the Mongols, respectively to the North and to the South of Khalkha Mongolia. See Taveirne (2004) and Bawden (1985).

Ulaanbaatar, they do not seek high numbers of converts, another reason why they are well considered by local authorities. In contrast with Buddhist monks, Christian and other missionaries spread their religious message to the locals through their respective NGOs that are engaged in charity work, running hospitals, clinics, rehabilitation centers for alcoholics or orphanages, English or computer courses. They explain their doctrine concisely, using simple words and readable texts that they diffuse to the lay public. Such methods find they way into the population, especially among the more destitute—the merciless transition to a market economy after 1990 has tipped over one third of the population below the poverty line—who benefit from these humanitarian and social activities. Furthermore, young people avidly seeking contacts with Western culture, perceived as modern and exciting, have found opportunities to establish contacts with Westerners[43] and, in the case of some, to travel or to study abroad thanks to their conversion.

According to a poll conducted in 1994, 7% of Mongols declared they had no religion while 70% declared having one, and if one includes beliefs in various supernatural forces (such as local spirits, magic, etc.) this figure goes up to 75%.[44] Muslims, that is Kazakhs living mainly in the Western province of Bayan-Ölgii, were 5% (many had at that stage already departed for Kazakhstan), Christians were still only a few (3%), and those declared 'shamanist' even fewer (1.6%). A large majority of Mongols declared themselves as Buddhist (60%).[45] These results need

43 The number of Korean Christian missionaries is also increasing. Christianity has become a prominent religion in Korea and this country presents the Mongols with a model (or a spectre) of what a Christian Mongolia might look like.

44 Atheism in communist countries has weakened the well-established religions more than the popular beliefs themselves. In China, the "Document 19" on religious issues that came out in 1982 indicated that many (Han) Chinese believed in various spirits but only a few had a declared religion. The same document acknowledged the still strong influence of Buddhism and Taoism on the Han population. In comparison with Democratic Mongolia, China does not allow the same religious freedom. Moreover many traditional practices, even when they are held in temples, are considered as 'superstitions' (*mixin*), not as religious practices, and consequently forbidden, cf. Lagerwey (1997: 4–5).

45 Tsedendamba (2003: 152–63). In the foreword, the head of the State University's Research Centre on Budhist culture indicate that 90% of the Mongols are Buddhist believers (*burkhan šašiniig šütedeg*) (*ibid.*: 8–10). As for the abbot of the main monastery, the Gandantegčinlen, in a 2003 interview he gave a lower figure: 70 to 80 % (see Wallace (2008: 44–53). In contrast, Udo Barkmann (1997: 69–70) points out that according to a 1985 survey 95% of the people were declared atheist whereas in October 1992 already 52% acknowledged they were believers. In Barkmann's opinion, most

to be tempered, as the word ‘religion’ in Mongolian, *šašin*, was until recently synonymous with Buddhism and never used to designate shamanism; we also know that resorting to shamans was becoming more open and common in the early 1990s, even for Buddhists, as long as it helped them to overcome specific difficulties in their lives, and was not seen as conflicting with their faith. The above poll also indicated that Buddhists were regarded as rather educated, having freely chosen their faith and were sensitive to social issues. In Mongolia, certainly, Buddhism was correlated with knowledge and culture, on which it had a monopoly. Moreover, in communist times, the study of Buddhism had been restricted, apart from the handful of monks, to a few academics with a good command of Tibetan, a situation which might have added to it being perceived as intellectual.

However, the present religious pluralism is an entirely new situation and a cause of concern for the state. Not that the ex-communists and former nomenklatura, compelled by circumstance to convert to social democracy, are troubled by the religious revival that has hit the country. On the contrary, they even play a part in it, and traditional creeds are now regarded as cultural heritage. Besides, from an emotional point of view, nobody has ever forgotten that Buddhism was the religion of one’s own father and forefathers, a strong reference in Mongolian culture, not to mention that, as for the rest of the population, all these apparatchiks might have had at least one monk amongst their close kin.

It is actually the ‘foreign religions’, or the ‘non-traditional religions’ as they are generally called, that are a source of concern for the state. What is at stake here is their *foreign* character. As a rule, Mongol converts are rather young, which is also a basic feature of the Mongol population today, and the transmission of traditions was already hampered during the communist era. Within the political class, many fear that the young converts might lose their ‘Mongolness’. Yet to restrict foreign religious activities in Mongolia is a delicate matter when the economy relies so heavily on conditional aid coming from Western donor countries or institutions sensitive to religious lobbying. This is a situation the authorities became aware of when, in the 1990s, they decided to block the entry of significant quantities of bibles, triggering complaints

---

Mongols were still ‘clearly atheist’ up to the mid-1980s. From the data presented it appears that Mongols were expressing politically correct opinions rather than their real thoughts, something that would still have been risky at the time.

in the US from religious organisations. Furthermore, the present regime has not allowed Buddhism once again to become the state religion or barred foreign influences from entering the country. The new Constitution has made Mongolia a pluralist society that acknowledges human and civil rights and maintains the separation of Church and state. Even so, successive Mongolian administrations have accorded legitimacy to the preservation of a cultural distinctiveness that contributes to Mongolian national consciousness.[46] In order to defend Mongols' identity, the authorities tend to accord a special treatment to the 'national religion'. Mongol leaders, who also expect Buddhism to play the social role that is generally expected of religion, regularly encourage the Buddhist Church to reform itself: to impose stricter morals on its clergy, to put an end to its internal feuds, and generally to adapt to the transforming Mongolian society in order to become more attractive to the young generation.[47] Government members and officials take part in some religious ceremonies or venues, displaying consideration for Buddhism and giving it a prominent place at a symbolic level.[48] The President P. Očirbat was accordingly present at the inauguration of the new standing statue of Megžid Žanraiseg (Avalokiteśvara), a deity that has been associated with Mongolia's independence in the past century;[49] in 2004 the Prime Minister went to Bodhgayā (Bihar, India)—where the Buddha is said to have attained illumination—to lay the foundations of a Mongolian monastery. As for the new golden Buddha standing at the feet of Bogd Mountain under a great symbol of communist Mongolia, the monument to Mongolian-Soviet friendship, and facing the state palace from afar, it was erected with the patronage of the Environment Ministry. Lamas, and occasionally shamans, are invited to take part in state ceremonies such as the cult of Mongolia's main sacred mountains that was resumed in 1995 by presidential decree, or the important ritual that took place in 2006 on Mount

[46] Tsedendamba (*op. cit.*: 150).

[47] See the opening speech of President Bagabandi at the Conference on State-Church relations organised by the Gandantegčinlen monastery (*Tör, süm khiidiin khariltsaa: orčin üye* [State-Church relations today]: 6–10). In this respect the Mongol administration acknowledges the positive influence of foreign religions.

[48] A broad interpretation of the article 9 of the 1992 Constitution mentioning that state and religions should respect each other.

[49] The initial statue had been erected following the proclamation of Mongolia's independence in 1911. At the time of the great purges the statue was cut into pieces and the copper was sent to Soviet Union during the Second World War.

Burkhan Khaldun, near to Chinggis Khan's birthplace (and probably his yet undiscovered grave), on the occasion of the 800th anniversary of the founding of the Great Mongolian state in 1206 (Dulam 2004: 82–83ff).

While the Buddhist Church still enjoys a privileged status in Mongolian society and in its relations with the state, it has been deprived of the cultural and ideological domination it once held. Communist Mongolia may have visibly failed to produce a worthy opponent to Buddhism—atheism as an intellectual and philosophical trend is noticeably absent today, despite several decades of an anticlerical regime—but it has contributed to weakening its overwhelming influence, mainly through an efficient education policy that has clearly undermined the supremacy of the Church.

Today Mongolian Buddhism is facing strong opponents, be they old ones (shamans, healers) or newcomers (foreign missionaries). It has to compete with them in order to gain support from the lay public and secure their patronage, the keystone of the Buddhist institution. Numbers of new converts may still be limited, but pressure from the newcomers can be felt distinctly. Among the latter strong points we can mention the links Christian churches have with powerful and influential states and the fact that—in the case of at least on of them—they own one major TV channel in Mongolia (Eagle TV, which is actually more highly rated for its Western style and the quality of its news than for its religious broadcasts and the requirement that its Mongol employees know the Bible). According to Wallace's figures for 2007, the total number of Buddhist centres (about thirty) had been decreasing compared to other religions, and the number of monks fell from five to three thousand between 2000 and 2003. In contrast, there were already some 300 foreign religious organisations.[50]

Although lacking the unifying figure of a prestigious incarnate lama such as the Jebtsündamba, monasteries and Buddhist monks still dominate the post-communist religious stage. Believers can be seen queuing in monasteries to commission rituals; up-and-coming lamas living in town, carrying cell phones and driving four-wheel-drive cars are invited to perform rituals in private homes. Many families have a lama

[50] For these figures, see Wallace (2008: 46–47). Majer identified 36 temples in the capital and of some 2000 to 3000 monks (at most) for the whole country (around 1000 in Ulaanbaatar and noted that only half of the monasteries are registered, as required since 1994. See Majer (2009: 56–57).

whom they regularly consult: for problems relating to health or work, travel, family quarrels, a string of bad luck, death, drawing horoscopes, etc.

One such private ritual I attended in 2006 was dedicated to the 21 Tārās. It took place in the capital in the house of an educated couple (both engineers trained in Russia). The wife had initially consulted the astrologer of a nearby temple because of a enduring tensions between her youngest son and his wife, health problems concerning their child, and astrological bad omens. The astrologer-monk diagnosed a 'defilement' that had entered the family home, probably through a mug or a teacup coming from a 'bad direction' (a teacup is indeed a customary present at funerals and is thus connected to death pollution). He had consequently recommended a specific healing ritual (*dom khiikh*). The mother then invited the family lama—who by chance was able to perform the said ritual—to come and perform it in their house: this consisted in reciting a text to the 21 Tārās and while lighting little home-made dough candles which were then thrown away in a plastic bowl full of water. The mother alone attended the ritual, facing the lama, praying with eyes closed and hands joined while the rest of the family went about their daily activities. As the ritual was coming to an end, she made the circular gesture calling for prosperity with both palms opened wide and joined above her head. The object of this ritual was to solve a series of disorders of which the causes are regarded as supernatural by laymen and monks alike, and that therefore required symbolic remedy through ritual.

A price list of the various rituals available in each temple is always placed in public view. However, more often, the monk receives a donation from the lay patron according to the complexity and length of the ritual as well as the person's financial capacity.

While such ceremonies and rites are easily organised in the city due to the high number of monks and monasteries in the economic heart of the country, this is not the case in rural areas. Here lies the casualty of Mongolia's conversion to the market economy. The revival of Buddhism is not firmly established, as Ole Brunn (2005: 15) noticed in the Arkhangai province in 1999 and 2000. The example he described was explained by the lack of a recognised religious authority, an absence which was not counterbalanced by the 'strong faith' of the local herders. The economic crisis has had a high social cost and has led to a significant migration of rural people to the bustling capital,

where nearly half of the population is now concentrated. Temples and monasteries flourish in Ulaanbaatar, while in the countryside many small temples that were reopened in the early 1990s have had to shut down.[51] Ole Brunn further comments that Buddhism eventually re-established itself after a charismatic lama whose authority depended on an external source settled in the area. This spiritual figure, called Doržtseveen was a rough character who feared neither god nor man before he converted to Buddhism. He then spent two years in Dharamsala, and eventually came back to his native place where he had a monastery built. Today the monastery is a booming business. People regard him as the reincarnation of a former holy lama, and he has become a local celebrity.[52] Presenting himself as a monk, he offers medicinal cures, divination and spiritual counselling, helps to find lost cattle, indicates the auspicious and non-auspicious days for the herders' diverse activities, gives them news of their dead, etc. His field of action clearly relates to the daily concerns of the people, and this has not changed much from pre-modern times. A similar continuity can be observed as far as the preservation of the monks' monopoly on religious knowledge and ritual techniques is concerned: the laity are maintained in the donor's position, as the beneficiaries of ritual performances. In the rituals mentioned above, either in the capital or in the rural setting, the monk acts for the believer as a go-between, allowing him to gain a practical benefit from religion, readily available in this world, and to make spiritual progress that will secure him a better rebirth.

One should not, however, conclude that laypeople hold the Mongol clergy in great esteem. On the contrary, they often have harsh words about the monks' low standards of morality and their money-oriented minds. Many disapprove of the general lack of respect for the rule of celibacy, an inappropriate form of behaviour in *Dge lugs* monks. The lay public is aware of the inadequate education they receive in doctri-

[51] Many temples that were opened in the countryside in the early 1990s are now closed, owing to a lack of funding, trained monks and recruitment problems. Majer (2009: 53) and Teleki (2009: 70) have noticed that often those private temple ventures do not last, and new foundations appear regularly. Most temple openings are not the revival of previous institutions, but represent private new foundations.

[52] Incarnate lamas are not yet a significant phenomenon in view of the hundreds of reincarnations, more or less prestigious, of pre-Revolution times. According to Majer (2009: 53) and Teleki (2009: 72–73), three reincarnations had been identified in the provinces they surveyed—all three recognised by the Dalai Lama. As Majer notes, either they are controversial or they are recognised by a few people only.

nal matters, a direct consequence of the great human, intellectual and material losses of the thirties.[53]

The traditional divide between monks performing prayers and rituals, and laity securing the material needs of the former through donations, reflects the well-known politico-religious *yon mchod*[54] relation that existed between the former Mongol rulers and the Tibetan hierarchs, in other words between the 'alms giver' (Mong. *öglöögiin ezen*), the lay patron and protector, on the one hand, and the 'spiritual master' who is more of a master in rituals—preferably esoteric ones—on the other. In the present Buddhist revival, what matters most is to resume the broken thread of tradition rather than adapt it to the new environment that has developed in the meantime. Even so, while the former relation is reactivated, the respective position and competence of each protagonist has undergone too deep a transformation not to have an impact on this relationship.

From the monks' point of view, the new situation does not seem to justify changing Mongolian Buddhist traditions beyond adopting a few selected modern technologies. On the contrary, they draw their legitimacy from an archaism that is fully assumed. This claim of repeating the ancient rituals as they used to be is not a reality but an ideal representation. This enables them to restore symbolically the broken thread, to produce an imaginary continuity through their discourse and to validate today's rituals as immutable. In reality, there is a new world that this discourse ignores, keeping to the ideal it strives to rebuild.[55] This

---

[53] The difficulty monks have in keeping to their vows of purity is criticised by the Tibetan and Western establishment alike, says Majer. One reason lies with the fact that the rule for *Dge lugs* monks to live in the monastery—only partially followed before the Revolution—has not been revived. Besides, there are not enough fully-ordained monks (*gelen*). In fact very few monastic communities have the required number (4) of *gelen* (only three out of the 36 monasteries in Ulaanbaatar): see Majer (2009: 52, 59).

[54] On this relationship between the Tibetan high lamas and the Manchu emperors, see F. Jagou in this volume.

[55] On an auspicious day in 1997, on the initiative of the city's services for children, youth and women, a wedding ceremony took place, in the city's main monastery. This is rather unexpected considering that Buddhist monks were traditionally external to the wedding ritual (with the exception of the astrological component) and even undesirable for symbolic reasons connected with fertility. It was nevertheless the 'wish to revive tradition' that was stressed by the organisers, as well as the lower cost of the ceremony in comparison to ceremonies held at the Wedding palace (a legacy of communist time): see *Mongol Messenger*, 14/05/1997. For a discussion of Indian cases of the necessary change in rituals, always denied in the discourse of the actors, cf. Colas and Tarabout (2006).

intentional archaism stems more from the clergy itself as a part of its authority, than from the laity. Although a few monks recommend adapting Buddhism to the current situation, and in particular using Mongolian instead of the Tibetan language—a change all the more easy since the basis for a Mongolian liturgy already exists[56]—such a plan is opposed by most monks, including young ones, who associate the use of Tibetan with the efficacy of their religion.[57] Knowledge of Tibetan (limited as it often is) is also a specific attribute of the clergy, and is an even a more important asset today when the lay public itself benefits from a good level of education. As a matter of fact, apart from the *dhāraṇī* (Mong. *tarni*) formulas, the efficacy of which rests on the pronunciation of the original Sanskrit words, nothing in the Buddhist scriptures, themselves already translated into many languages, prevents the use of local languages in the liturgy. The main advocates for adopting a Mongolian liturgy are to be found among scholars, on account of their greater sensitivity to the historical and national aspects of this issue rather than to the ritual, not to say magical, aspects.[58] In fact the shift to a Mongolian liturgy had already been suggested in the early 1990s, taking advantage of the material that already existed in a very small number of monasteries; or using in the first stage the texts that the Gandantegčinlen monastery had substituted for the Tibetan ones after 1944, as required by the communist authorities. Mongolian as a liturgical language was in fact introduced by Erdenpil, *mkhan po* lama

---

56 The Mergen Gegen monastery (*Mergen keid*, cyr. *khiid*) is the most significant example of this. The monastery is the seat of the Mergen gegen lineage of incarnate lamas. Its founder, Luvsangdambižalsan (1717–1766), the author of a great number of works and translations, is an important figure of Mongolian-styled Buddhism. The monastery is located in Inner Mongolia, in the Urad Front Banner, in the Bayanna□ur Mongolian league (it was turned into a Chinese administrative unit, a municipality or *shi* in 2003), to the West of the industrial centre Baotou (mong: Buγatu). On this important monastery, see the two volumes published by S. Galluu (2003). See also Elverskog (2006: 36–37).

57 As Elverskog rightly points out, it is rituals rather than knowledge of the Dharma that are central to the relationship between the monks and the laity in Mongolian Buddhism, and the clergy clearly intend to do "what they have always done: perform rituals for the laity and the state" (*ibid.*: 37).

58 It would however be inappropriate, in the context of Mongolia, to oppose scholars and monks since most of the study and transmission of Buddhist literature took place in academic circles during the communist period, and Buddhism remains a strong field at the university today. Hence the close connections that still exist between the academic specialists of Buddhism and the monks that they contributed to train.

of the monastery at the time. The experiment lasted until the beginning of the 1960s when his successor Gombožav restored the Tibetan liturgy.[59] Today supporters of the reform are a minority. According to Majer (2009: 54–55), there is but one temple where the liturgy is recited in Mongolian, the Buyan Arvijikhui khiid (another one closed in 2006); and it performs the recitation of Tantric texts in such a way as to prevent lay people from understanding them, as this would be too dangerous.

In any case, present Mongolian Buddhism is still able to satisfy the demands of the lay people regarding their well-being and good fortune. In this respect, its main opponents are the shamans and other charismatic healers—a part also played by some business-oriented monks whose success depends as much on their charisma as on a highly valued training in the Buddhist Mecca, Dharamsala. On account of religion and culture being strongly bonded with each other, the demands stemming from the Mongol believers constitute a specific repertoire related to their socio-cultural environment. Mongols monks, cast in the same mould, master this repertoire but this is not the case of the new religious players who have turned up from other horizons and are not culturally equipped to fulfil the requests of the locals, and who would probably categorise such requests as superstitions and not 'religious' acts.

[59] D. Tserensodnom, specialist of Mongolian literature, or the historian Dašbadrakh among others, have pleaded for developing a more Mongolian Buddhism. See for instance the long interview given by Dašbadrakh to the weekly paper *Il Tovčoo* (dated 15–24/10/1998: 6, 9). Among the Buddhist establishment some are also in favor of developing a Mongolian Buddhism, such as Dambažav, abbot of the Daščoilon monastery in Ulaanbaatar, who considers that it will facilitate the public's understanding of Buddhist tenets and who points out that young people are asking for it (see *Il Tovčoo*, 3–10/12/1997: 6). S. Soninbayar, a younger monk teaching at the Buddhist Institute and himself a translator, recommends using Mongolian for commenting on Buddhist texts or giving religious lectures, for example on the radio, or in the case of secular rituals such as the cult of sacred mountains where monks are invited to recite prayers for local spirits and deities. Yet at the same time Soninbayar prefers the use of Tibetan in the Buddhist liturgy and in particular for Tantric texts, on the grounds that these constitute a secular tradition. Moreover, once translated into Mongolian they might appear trivial, or even shocking, to adepts. Therefore in the interest of the faith of latter, reciting Buddhist texts in Tibetan is much better, declared Soninbayar (interview to the daily paper *Zasagiin gazariin medee* dated 7/02/1997: 5).

III. Buddhism and modernity

Buddhism remains the major religious actor on the post-communist religious scene and is comfortably situated in its cultural context. Yet, one might wonder how this form of Buddhism, which is so reluctant to accord a significant religious role to the laity apart from professing faith and providing material support, can satisfy the more demanding and individualist Mongols of today. Furthermore, could it not be that being rooted in former Mongolia's history and way of life—a key element for the present legitimacy of Buddhism—might turn out to be an obstacle to it finding its place in a modern and fast-changing Mongolia?

As a matter of fact the prestige associated with Western culture and way of life is what most appeals to the younger generation. It has been mentioned above that the simple language employed by foreign missionaries differs widely from the obscure Buddhist liturgy. Consequently, in the 1990s, grasping basic knowledge about foreign religions was easier for Mongols than learning the rudiments of their forefathers' faith. The tenets of Buddhism cannot easily reach the lay people—not to mention the significant proportion of monks who stumble through the scriptures without gathering much from what they read—as long as they are conveyed in a foreign and complex language. Now, the existing Mongolian translations of the Buddhist canon have not yet been transcribed into Cyrillic script (used in Mongolia since the 1940s) and the ancient editions in old Mongolian script are kept in libraries. In other words, whereas the behaviour of the believers has undergone a major transformation, shifting from a common cultural norm to the possibility of choosing individually from a wider range of beliefs, the information about Buddhism that is easily accessible to the public is quite limited in contrast to what is offered by the other religions. Admittedly, much effort has been dedicated over the last decade on the part of Mongol Buddhist organisations to redress the situation and to translate, make accessible and popularise the *Dharma* among the population. The town's bookshops, even non-specialised ones, today offer attractive and colourful Buddhist booklets to their clients. Among the most productive organisations is the Shambala Association, that releases a substantial quantity of these cheap publications that in most cases aim at mundane benefits: presentation of the major protective deities, catalogues of *dhāraṇī* formulas to be used in various circum-

stances, how to reach the mythical kingdom of Shambala, and so forth. Many deal with traditions favoured by the ‘Red’, non-reformed schools, and Tantric texts, such as the writings of Majiglavdon (Tib. Ma cig lab sgron, 1055–1145). Mongol Buddhist centres have opened. One of these, the Bodi Čandamani centre, opened in 1988, and aims at supporting the development of Buddhism in Mongolia and emphasises the social value of the religion. This centre strives hard to attract young people, points out Buddhism’s contribution to shaping the Mongol nation and identity, as well as to the ‘sacred duty’ of preserving “the traditions and the cultural legacy of the Mongol nation” and of passing them on to the next generation. A famous pop singer (Sarantuyaa), a TV channel (UBS) and a radio station are among the sponsors of the Bodi Čandamani centre. It also receives support from one major Western Buddhist organisation, The Tibet foundation, whose head office is in London.

Of peculiar interest is the confrontation, in a country boasting a long Buddhist tradition, between local Buddhism and the Western modernist and transnational form of the religion that appeared in the West towards the end of the 19th century. The latter has since benefited from the forced exile of major Tibetan Buddhist leaders and religious masters. In this environment, the Dalai Lama has adopted a discourse compatible with modernist Buddhism, defending a scientific view of Buddhism, playing down its ritual aspects and encouraging monks’ practice among the laity. This has helped to develop mutually beneficial links between the Tibetan establishment and Western Buddhists.[60] In Mongolia, the Tibet Foundation has thus set its own goal on restoring the original Buddhadharma and improving the religious training of monks *and* adepts alike. Many of its publications are bilingual—English-Mongolian—and intended for children. In contrast to the Mongol centre Bodhi Čandamani, the goals of the Tibet foundation are universal and free of constitutive elements referring to local or national practice of Buddhism; in other words, it is ‘de-ethnicised’.[61]

[60] G. Dreyfus (2005: 176–79) shows that the Dalai Lama’s attitude is in fact more complex, and that he has remained a traditionalist, turning when needed to divination and protective deities, “as any Buddhist”, and less reluctant to recognise incarnate lamas.

[61] For a discussion of the dichotomy in the West between immigrant, ‘ethnic’ Buddhism and Western transnational Buddhism, and its application to a Buddhist country such as Mongolia, see Elverskog (2006).

The gap between traditional/national and modernist/transnational forms of Buddhism is even greater in the case of the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahāyana Tradition (FPMT), headed by Bzod pa (Zöpa) Rinpoche,[62] as its diverse activities in Ulaanbaatar since 1999 bear witness. Downtown, the FPMT Buddhist centre stands out with its *stūpa* adorned by colourful prayer-flags and contrasts with the grey and dull Mormon edifice (the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) next door—in itself a striking picture of religious pluralism in contemporary Mongolia. At the time of my visit in 2006, the Centre was concurrently dispensing information on Buddhism, organising English courses and running a convivial vegetarian café as well as being a place for religious activities.

Not only was the head of the Centre from Switzerland, but the religious specialist in charge of the Buddhist teachings was French, and moreover a nun: called Chantal *bagši* ("Master Chantal")[63] by her followers, she was an outstanding illustration of the transnational feature of the modernist trend in Buddhism. According to a biographical note published by the International Mahāyana Institute and an interview that appeared in a Mongol newspaper, pinned on a wall in the Centre, the nun in question studied with a Tibetan doctor of traditional Buddhist philosophy (*dge bshes*) at Nalanda monastery[64] in the south of France from 1985 to 1994, and made several extended visits to Tibetan monasteries in India. She was ordained as a novice (*dge tshul ma*) in 1986 in Bodhgayā by the Dalai Lama during a collective ceremony, then received full ordination in 1992 from Master Thich Huyen Vi—the abbot of the Vietnamese monastery of Thich Huyen Vi—and *dge bshes* Tengye, from the Vajra Yogini Institute, the sister organisation of the

[62] The FPMT was founded in the framework of the International Mahāyana Institute in 1975 by the Tibetan lama Thub bstan Ye shes (1935–1984), one of the Buddhist masters of Bzod pa Rinpoche. The two of them established Kopan monastery in Bodnath (Nepal) in 1971. Right from the start the monastery organised teachings and meditation retreats offered mostly to Western Buddhists. Since then the FPMT has opened about 130 centres worldwide. Following the death of Lama Ye shes in 1984, Bzod pa Rinpoche became the spiritual director of the FPMT. Born in 1946 in Nepal, he is presented as the reincarnation of Kun bzang ye shes (1865–1946), a master of the *rnying ma* school. See Jamyang Wangmo (2005).

[63] Her Tibetan name is Bstan 'dzin bde skyid.

[64] Located in the Tarn *département*, this *dge lugs* monastery was founded in 1981 by the same Thub bstan ye shes and Bzod pa Rinpoche. See Lenoir (1999: 438).

Nalanda monastery.[65] She had been a director at the International Mahāyana Institute from 1998 to 2003 and delivered Buddhist teachings in another FPMT centre, in Florida,[66] before coming to Ulaanbaatar.

In 2006, the FPMT opened a second centre in the industrial city of Darkhan, in the north of the country. Moreover, the foundation ran a soup kitchen, a community clinic and a children's activity centre,[67] all of which are located on the grounds of the old Geser temple in Maimacheng—the former Chinese commercial area of Ulaanbaatar. The temple of Geser itself has been restored with the support of the FPMT and has been turned into a nunnery, Dolma ling (Sgrol ma gling). This sponsoring of a nunnery by the foundation represents a change in the Mongol Buddhist landscape where, contrary to the case of Tibet, nuns were markedly absent. With the end of communist rule, Mongol women wishing to practise Buddhism in a deeper and less restricted way than in ancient times had to satisfy themselves with meetings within Buddhist women groups[68] and reading texts under the direction of a monk, monks being the only legitimate holders of knowledge.

At the Centre itself, the religious activities of the FPMT dealt mainly with preparing and spreading easily understandable Buddhist texts for adepts, generally adapted from English. The Mongolian translator was also in charge of interpreting during the nun's teachings, which were given in English, facing the followers seated on cushions. These teachings took place in a prayer hall upstairs and so did the meditation sessions and the retreats. On the ground floor, a special room was designed for ritual offerings of water initiated by the FPMT founder

65 Cf. Thubten Dondrub (2002: 116–18. On the controversial question of the complete ordination of Buddhist nuns in the Tibetan tradition, see Nicola Schneider in this volume.

66 Before the arrival of this nun in 2004, another Western monk, the *gelen* (Tib. *dge slong*) Thubten Žamtso (Tib. Thub bstan rgya mtsho), an Australian doctor born in 1943, had been the religious specialist in charge at the Ulaanbaatar FPMT since its opening.

67 In the children's activity centre the person in charge during my visit in 2006 was a young Mongol woman, adept of the Bahá'í movement, a religion founded in Iran in the 19th century that holds as its main tenet the basic identity of all world religions.

68 Few women's temples have opened, and these are mostly associated with Tantric traditions. Most could be called assembles of women lay practitioners rather than temples, with the exception of the Dolma ling (also called Dakhi Ekh) monastery mentioned here: see Majer (2009: 55).

that consists in renewing the water of many rows of bowls all around the room.

The crowds that throng local monasteries and pilgrimage places are absent from the Centre. As it is committed to the spiritual development of its followers, its activities differ widely from the usual occupations of Mongol monks inside monasteries as well as in town, where they are invited to perform rituals.[69] Nevertheless, the FPMT Centre and local monasteries are in contact either through the former's patronage of one of the temples (the Idgaa Čoižinlin of Gandantegčinlen monastery), or on the rare occasion of some common Buddhist activities. Western Buddhists appear to be dismayed by the practice of the locals, which they tend to view as mere superstitions, far removed from what they consider the 'true' Mahāyana tradition they themselves follow and are eager to propagate in Mongolia. The director of the Centre stressed the surprising difficulty of this task in a Buddhist country like Mongolia. In the eyes of the French nun, rituals such as divination or exorcism did not originally belong to Buddhism. Rather they appeared in its wake and are external to it. It is interesting to note that such negative judgments seem to spare the Tibetan Buddhist community and clergy, although their religious practice was in many ways similar to that of the Mongols, and thus far from 'true' Mahāyana. The ritualised and 'superstitious' aspects of Tibetan Buddhism call into question the modernist interpretation of it. It is thus more comfortable for Western Buddhists to view the Dalai Lama's acceptance of their approach as a rejection of this ritualistic and pre-modern Buddhism. For the Tibetan establishment, while accommodating the requirements of its new and much needed Western supporters is understandable, as well as in line with the history of Buddhist history, the question of the ways in which it should address its local and its Western devotees may induce double standards, if not a measure of schizophrenia.[70]

[69] Commenting on the increase of individual religious requests in modern times, the Indologist C. Clémentin-Ojha points out that while personal realisation has long been present in Asia, the decrease of collective religious practice is a rather new phenomenon (1997: xvii). The Mongol case indicates that the desire for personal spiritual or religious realisation does exist, at least because people aspire to a good rebirth, but coexists with strong lineage and family links that extend to ancestors. This makes individual conversions problematic, as it would imply a rupture with the family members, both alive and dead.

[70] For Dreyfus (2005: 177) the tension induced by the Dalai Lama's double discourse is not antithetical, but requires repeated negotiation.

Conclusion

As Georges Dreyfus (2005: 173) points out, the modernist trend in Buddhism advocates meditation practice, detached from rituals, the latter being considered as superstition or accommodations for the laity. Such a view is held by many Western Buddhists, who consider Buddhism as a philosophy rather than a religion, as a spiritual experience rather than a faith based on an unquestioned dogma. In the eyes of modernists, there lies the true substance of Buddhist tradition: all the rest would be local adaptation and historical revision. Now, this opinion is challenged by the reality of Buddhist tradition in Asia. It amounts to a re-interpretation and invention that ignores the ritual, mythology and metaphysics that are at heart of the Buddhist scriptures and that have played a major role in all historical traditions.

Furthermore, do Western adepts really consider Buddhism as a philosophy? Lionel Obadia notes in his study of Buddhism in the West that while the adepts tend to value the intellectual aspect of teachings in their assertions, in practice they are more inclined to initiations, although they say that this "is too reminiscent of religion". In the view of this author, what attracts them is to be initiated into the sacred, the esoteric, the mysterious. Conversion to Buddhism also involves ritual practices that testify to one's membership of a religious community better more eloquently than a good understanding of the doctrine.[71] In other words, the idea of modernist Buddhism being detached from ritual and faith pertains to an imaginary ideal rather than to reality.

As for the Mongols, after they adopted Tibetan Buddhism as their national religion, it progressively became part of their own history and was so inextricably connected to Mongolia's culture that the frontiers between the two were blurred. As the Dalai Lama himself commented during his 1994 visit, for the Mongols, the question is not about liking or not liking Buddhism, it is about preserving one's traditions, culture and art.[72] If one admits that religion is cultural and discriminating rather than universal and transposable, then Mongolian Buddhism has become such a specific vessel that it is difficult for others to use it. In the same way modernist Buddhism corresponds to a specific vision of

[71] Obadia (1999: 214, 219–20).

[72] *Ardiin Erkh* [Democracy] dated 10/09/1994, quoted by Barkmann (1997: 77). This statement is also true for Tibetans.

the Western subject. On the one hand it reflects the Christian rejection of popular forms of religiosity deemed pagan and superstitious, and on the other, it expresses the rationalist reinterpretation by Europeans of the 18–19th centuries that the Pāli Canon was the only true and unaltered one.[73] For centuries, in accordance with the political context, Mongol Buddhism has conveyed different meanings. Today its ritual practices display an illusory tradition but find a legitimacy in fidelity to the imaginary model. Beyond lie symbolic, national and moral resources that Mongols can call upon in the face of modernity.

Bibliography

Aubin, F. 1996. La Mongolie des premières années de l'après-communisme. La popularisation du passé national dans les mass media mongols. *In* M.D. Even (ed.), Proceedings of the 37th PIAC (1994, Chantilly), *Études mongoles et sibériennes* 27: 305–26.

Baabar [Batbayar, B.-E.] 1999. *History of Mongolia*. D. Suhjargalmaa, S. Burenbayar, H. Hulan, N. Tuya (translators from Mongol), C. Kaplonski (ed.), Cambridge: The White Horse Press.

—— 2006. *Mongolčuud. Nüüdel, suudal* [revised Mongolian edition]. Ulaanbaatar.

Barkmann, U. B. 1997. The Revival of Lamaism in Mongolia. *Central Asian Survey* 16(1), 69–79

Batsaikhan, O. 2005. *Mongol ündesten büren erkht uls bolokh zamd* (1911–1946) [The Mongol nation on its way to sovereignty (1911–1946)]. Ulaanbaatar: Admon.

Bawden, C. R. 1961. *The Jebtsundamba Khutukhtus of Urga*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz (Asiatische Forschungen 9).

—— C. R. 1985. *Shamans, Lamas, and Evangelicals. The English Missionaries in Siberia*. Londres: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

—— C. R. 1989 [1968]. *The Modern History of Mongolia*. Londres: Kegan Paul International.

Brunn, O. 2001. The politics of Buddhist resilience in rural Mongolia: About a paper presented at the Mongolia Society in 2001. *Mongolia Society Bulletin*, Fall 2001, 15.

Buddiin šašin, soyoliin tailbar toli [Dictionary of Buddhist culture and religion]. 2000. 2 vols. Ulaanbaatar: State University of Mongolia.

Clémentin-Ojha, C. (ed.) 1997. *Renouveau religieux en Asie*. Paris: Presses de l'EFEO (Études thématiques 6).

---

[73] See Obadia (1999: 14–18, 32–35). In the same way, Frédéric Lenoir (1999: 12–13) observes that for French practitioners Buddhism often becomes a way of rediscovering their traditional faith and enables them "to tell the old in new words". He comes to the conclusion that "Buddhism in France" is turning into "French Buddhism" and underlines the misunderstandings produced by the transmission of an Asian philosophical wisdom into a culture characterised by modern individualism, Greco-Judeo-Christian anthropology, and going through a deep identity crisis.

Colas, G. and G. Tarabout. 2006. Rites hindous : transferts et transformations. *Purusharta* 25, Centre d'études de l'Inde et de l'Asie du Sud.

Dašnyam G., E. Mönkhtsetseg and D. Erdenebat (eds) 2003. *Manž, Mongol alban bičigiin zarim ner tomyoo, üg khelleg* [Manchu and Mongol Administrative terms and expressions]. Ulaanbaatar: National Archives of Mongolia.

Dreyfus, G. 2005. Entre déités protectrices et gloire internationale : analyse de l'attitude du 14e dalaï-lama face à la modernité et au bouddhisme. *In* Martin Brauen (ed.) *Les dalaïs-lamas: Les 14 réincarnations du bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara.* Paris-Lausanne : Favre, 172–201

Dulam, S. 2004. *Khüree dörvön uuliin takhilga, belgedel* [Worship and symbolism of the four mountains of Khüree]. Ulaanbaatar: Mönkhiin üseg.

Elverskog, J. 2006, Two Buddhisms in contemporary Mongolia. *Contemporary Buddhism* 7, 29–47.

Futaki, Hiroshi. 2000. A Re-examination of the establishment of the Mongolian People's Party, centring on Dogsom's Memoir. *Inner Asia* 2(1), 37–61.

Galaarid, B.-O. 2005. Mongol delkhiin khögžliin töv bolž čadakh uu? [Can Mongolia become a world centre for (spiritual) development ?])]. *Önöödör* [Mongol daily paper "Today"], 04/07/2005.

Galluu (*Γalluu*), S. 2003. *Mongγol-iyar delgeregülügsen burqan šajin-u nom soyul uraliγ-un teüke* [Doctrinal, cultural and art history of the Buddhism spread in Mongolian regions]. 2 vol. Kökeqota: People's Press of Inner Mongolia.

Grivelet, S. 2001. Journal of the Lamas. Introduction by S. Grivelet. *The Mongolian Society Special Papers* 14.

Hamayon, R. 1996. Chamanisme, bouddhisme, héroïsme épique : quel support d'identité pour les Bouriates post-soviétiques? *In* M.D. Even (ed.) Proceedings of the 37th PIAC (1994, Chantilly), *Études mongoles et sibériennes* 27, 327–58.

Hallez, X. 2004. Elberdorž Rinčino. L'identité mongole en question : construction et enjeux d'une idée de nation dans un monde moderne. *Études mongoles et sibériennes* 35, 117–54.

Jamyang Wangmo. 2005. *The Lawudo Lama. Stories of Reincarnation from the Mount Everest Region.* Kathmandu: Vajra Publications.

Karmay, S. G. 2003. King Lang Darma and his Rule. *In* A. McKay (ed.), *Tibet and her Neighbours: A History.* Londres, Édition Hansjörg Mayer: 57–70

Lagerwey, J. 1997. A propos de la situation actuelle des pratiques religieuses traditionnelles en Chine. *In* C. Clémentin-Ohja (ed.) *Renouveau religieux en Asie*, Paris: Presses de l'EFEO (Etudes thématiques 6), 3–16.

Laruelle, M. 2005. La place du bouddhisme dans les discours nationalistes russes du XIXe siècle. *In* D. Savelli (ed.) *Slavica Occitania* 21, 225–41.

Lenoir, Frédéric. 1999. *Le Bouddhisme en France. Paris*: Fayard.

Lkhagvasüren, G. 1993. *Noyon khutagt Danzanravžaa* [The Noyan khutugtu Danzanravja]. Ulaanbaatar: Government Press.

Lonžid, Z. 1997. *Magsar khurtsiin Dugaržaviin uls töriin namtar* [A Political biography of M. Dugaržav]. Ulaanbaatar: Research center for contemporary history and human rights.

Majer, Z, 2009. Continuation or disjunction with the past and the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. *Silk Road* 7, 52–63.

Mongol ulsiin ündsen khuuli [The Constitution of Mongolia] 1992. Ulaanbaatar.

Obadia, L. 1999. *Bouddhisme et Occident. La diffusion du bouddhisme tibétain en France.* Paris: L'Harmattan.

Pürevžav, S. 1961. *Khuvsgaliin ömnökh Ikh Khüree* [The Great Monastery before the Revolution]. Ulaanbaatar: Academy of Sciences of the People's Republic of Mongolia.

Pürevžav, S. and D. Daščamts. 1965. *BNMAU-d süm khiid, lam nariin asuudliig šiid-verlesen-ni* (1921-1940) [The resolution of the issue of the monasteries and the lamas in the People's Republic of Mongolia (1921–1940)]. Ulaanbaatar: State Press Committee.

—— 1978. *Mongol dakhi šariin šašinii khuraangui tüükh* [A short history of Buddhism in Mongolia]. Ulaanbaatar: UDTDTMB Press.

Rosov, V. 2005. La mission bouddhique de Nikolaj Roerich au Tibet (1927–1928). *In* D. Savelli (ed.) *Slavica Occitania* 21, 243–63.

Sanders, F. 2001. The life and lineage of the Ninth Khalkha Jetsun Dampa Khutukhtu of Urga. *Central Asiatic Journal* 45(2) 273–303.

Savelli, D. 2005. Penser le bouddhisme et la Russie. *In* D. Savelli (ed.) *Slavica Occitania* 21, 9–86.

Šinkarev, L. I. 2006. *Tsedenbal, tüünii tsag üye, 2 : Barimt bičig, zakhidal, durtatgal* [Tsedenbal and his time, vol. 2: Documents, letters, souvenirs]. Tr. from Russian by Kh. Mergen. Ulaanbaatar: Admon.

Taveirne, P. 2004. *Han-Mongol Encounters and Missionary Endeavors: A History of Scheut in Ordos (Hetao)*, 1874–1911. Louvain: F. Verbiest Foundation.

Teleki, K, 2009. Building on ruins, memory and persistence: revival and survival of Buddhism in the Mongolian countryside. *Silk Road* 7, 64–73.

Thubten Dondrub, 2002. *Spiritual Friends: Meditations by Monks and Nuns of the International Mahayana Institute*. International Mahayana Institute.

Tör, süm khiidiin khariltsaa: orčin üye [State-Church relations today] 1988. Ulaanbaatar: Academy of sciences, Institute of Philosophy, Sociology and Law.

Tsedendamba, S. 2003. *Mongol uls dakhi šašinii nökhtsöl baidal* [The Religious situation in Mongolia]. Ulaanbaatar: State University of Mongolia.

Wallace, V. A. 2008. Mediating the power of Dharma: The Mongols' approaches to reviving Buddhism in Mongolia. *The Silk Road* 6(1), 44–53.

Yamaguchi, Zuihō. 1996. The fiction of King Dar-ma's persecution of Buddhism. *In* J. P. Drège (ed.) *De Dunhuang au Japon. Études chinoises et bouddhiques offertes à Michel Soymié*. Genève: Droz, 231–58.

NOTES ON CONTEMPORARY RANSOM RITUALS IN LHASA

ROBERT BARNETT[1]
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

At the centre of road junctions in the streets of Lhasa one can often see the traces of crushed dough imprinted with the marks of tyre treads. Sometimes fragments of a brightly coloured fabric can be made out, the remnants of a flattened cardboard box, and broken sticks with tufts of cotton wool attached to their ends. These are the residue of the *glud gtor* practice, a series of rituals which are performed to exorcise forces that cause illness, obstacles or difficulties for a person or a social entity. These rituals involve creating an effigy of the afflicted person and offering it to the interfering forces as a ransom or substitute to 'buy back' that person or entity. The tread-marks on the dough at the crossroads of the modern city are signs of the re-emergence of this ritual in everyday Tibetan life. The ritual brings with it a complex web of popular beliefs, practices and questions about social meaning and modernity, some of which I attempt to sketch out in this paper.

I use the term ritual here to describe a set of actions which claims to repeat an earlier set and which has a meaning or function considered by its participants to be greater than that indicated by the actions themselves. Thus when we applaud a performance or a speech, we repeat an earlier, customary practice while drawing on some collective, learnt

[1] This study could not have been done without the cooperation of Ronald Schwartz and Christopher Bell, who contributed greatly to the collection of materials, translations and ideas. I am also grateful for extensive advice and help from Lobsang Yongdan, Anne Benson, Samten Karmay, Katia Buffetrille, Françoise Pommaret, *Lopen* Lungtaen Gyatso, Charles Ramble, Isabelle Henrion-Dourcy, Lucy Hornby, Hildegard Diemberger, Tenzing Rigdol, Stephen Hugh-Jones, Elke Hessel, Hanung Kim, Lola Boatwright, the monks at Kumbum, Erin Burke, James Gentry, Laura Harrington, Ana Christina Lopes Nina, Chris Hatchell, N in Lhasa, Chang Tianle and others who need to remain nameless. The ideas expressed here are my responsibility. I would like to thank the Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University, Madeleine Zelin and the Österreichischen Fond zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung (the Austrian Fund for the Promotion of Scientific Research, Austrian Academy of Sciences) for support.

notion (which, as Žižek has pointed out,[2] need not be an unquestioning belief) that in this instance this practice of clapping is being carried out to indicate approval rather than some ostensibly more evident and pragmatic purpose such as, say, trying to squash flies or frighten mice. This shared meaning is, of course, specific to particular cultures and groups, and changes over time.

Clapping is an appropriate example to open any discussion of Tibetan rituals, especially those involving exorcism, because it has long been used as an example in popular western literature of the culturally specific significance of ritual, as well as of the pomposity of imperialists. This stems from a famous account of the entry of the British troops into Lhasa in 1904 following their invasion of Tibet given by their leader, Francis Younghusband: the general had written to his family that Tibetans had stood and applauded his men as they marched through the city streets. Perhaps the first to cast doubt on this story, not without some relish, was Skar ma Babu, a Tibetan employee of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, in 1918:[3]

> Another incorrect statement on Tibetans can be found in L.A.Waddell, *Lhasa and Its Mysteries* (London, 1905). We read here that British troops were '… heartily received by the Tibetans at Lhasa clapping their hands.' It may be that the applause is the best way Europeans welcome visitors. Tibetans, however, clap their hands when evil spirits have to be expelled.[4]

Shan kha ba 'Gyur med bsod nams stobs rgyal (1896–1967), later to become head of the Tibetan army and a minister in the Tibetan government, gave a similar account in his autobiography some fifty years later, describing his childhood recollections of the event:

---

[2] "Niels Bohr … provided the perfect example of how a fetishist disavowal of belief works in ideology. Seeing a horseshoe on his door, a surprised visitor said that he doesn't believe in the superstition that it brings luck. To which Bohr snapped back: 'I also do not believe in it; I have it there because I was told that it works also if one does not believe in it!'" (Žižek 2006).

[3] Skar ma Sum dhon Paul, also known as Skar ma Babu, in Richardus (1998: 100). Paul's text was written in Tibetan in 1918 and in English in 1928.

[4] French says that Younghusband wrote: "On the very day after our arrival I and all my staff donned our full-dress uniforms, and with an escort of three hundred men, including some of the Royal Fusiliers and a sort of band from the Gurkhas, we marched right through the city of Lhasa making all the noise we could." Younghusband wrote to his wife that there was "clapping and cheering at the sight of this great show". French describes this incident as "a perfect representation of the gulf between the two cultures" (French 1994: 242).

> When the British generals marched to the Tsuglakhang and such places, the Lhasa people showed an attitude of great displeasure. They shouted loudly and made clapping gestures to repel them and to bring rain. According to the customs of the foreigners these were seen clearly as signs of welcome, so they took off their hats and said thank you to everyone (Shan ka ba 1990: 7; also in French 1994: 242).

The same story is told of Schaefer and his exhibition to Tibet in 1939 (Cummins 2006: 331). There is some confusion about the accuracy of these accounts, since Younghusband wrote later that Tibetans had "paid little attention" to his first ride through the city. Waddell described the crowd that day as "sullen" and as staring "stolidly" at the British, and W. G. T. Currie, a junior British officer, wrote home on the same day saying that the Tibetans practised "a form of cursing" as the British passed them in the streets.[5] But, true or not, these stories are reminders that rituals have "insider" meanings that can be misread by outsiders, that they change their meanings according to their context, and that clapping does not always indicate approval.

In Tibetan tradition the action of clapping is an exorcism ritual in its simplest and most reduced form, one which works as a way of repelling an unwanted force partly because of the more or less self-evident logic that it can scare those forces away. The rationale behind the highly decorated figurines and miniature palaces that are a central feature of the *glud gtor* practice is not always so clear, and is layered with different forms of explanation and multiple functions simultaneously. In the first part of this paper, I review the existing literature on ransom rituals, already familiar to scholars, while in the second I offer initial observations on the contemporary practice in Lhasa today.

[5] There is no reference to the applause or approval from Tibetan bystanders in Younghusband's book *India and Tibet* on that day (1910: 247). Waddell, in *Lhasa and Its Mysteries*, says some women showed "timid curiosity" (1906: 335) and that the lamas (meaning monks) who watched them that day watched "sullenly" (*ibid.*: 340). Landon (1905: 205) also describes bystanders that day, or at least the monks outside the Jokhang, as sullen. W. G. T. Currie, whose letters were discovered by Roger Croston in 2002, had no doubt that ritual methods were being used to get rid of the British: he wrote home on August 8th 1904, the same day as the march: "On entering the city, there were very few Thibetans to be seen, but on coming out, they collected in the streets, and most of them were to be seen twisting their prayer wheels the wrong way round—(a form of cursing)" (Roger Croston, personal communication, March 21st 2009). Perhaps Younghusband exaggerated his initial account in order to impress his family or the home audience, or perhaps by the time the British generals and journalists came to publish their books, their authors had realised that applause does not always have the same function as the English ritual and had suppressed the evidence of cultural misinterpretation?

Fig. 1: Remains of a *glud gtor* in the city street. Photograph: Robert Barnett, Lhasa 2007.

I. Traditional Practice

The *glud gtor* is not a single practice, but part of a vast array of rituals which includes other ritual categories such as the *mdos, gto, bla bslu, gtor rgyag* and so on. These practices have an internal resemblance and can be considered as a family in that they seek to exorcise or purge an unwelcome force, usually a spirit of some kind. The practices can take the form of a single clap or can consist of a complex series of rituals including invocation, offering, visualisation, purification and so on, which might last several days or even months. The *glud* practice will often be at the core of these events. It can be done by a layperson alone, by a specialist, by members of some Buddhist monasteries, or very often by practitioners and specialists in Bon communities. In many cases a layperson will invite monks or specialists to his or her home to perform the ceremony, particularly if a member of the household has been taken ill and cannot be cured by medical treatment, either allopathic or Tibetan. Even in Buddhist texts these practices are often described as 'ancient', as pre-Buddhist, or as specifically Bon, and ambivalence or condescension towards the practice are often found in later Buddhist texts.[6]

The term *glud gtor* describes the offerings made in order to carry out the central transaction, which is seen as a ransom. The term *gtor* or *gtor ma* refers to cakes—literally, offerings or items that are thrown, strewn about or destroyed—that are made as offerings, often conical in shape, in all kinds of Tibetan rituals and often discarded afterwards as nourishment offered to a spirit, deity or form of the Buddha or as symbolising something of value that is offered figuratively. The word *glud* literally means 'ransom' or 'substitution', but it has come to refer to the ransom rites and to the object given as a ransom, and in particular the best known form of substitutional object, the effigy or "ritual substitute for a person or animal usually made of *tsampa*" (Valby, Tibetan Translation Tool).

This substitute for the afflicted person does not always have to be an effigy, and there are famous ritual cycles in the past where a human being was employed annually to act as the ransom, as in the various *glud 'gong* ceremonies before 1950 in Lhasa and the *dpa' bo ro glud* in Gyantse.[7] There are also forms of these rituals where life-sized effigies are used, notably the *gtor rgyag* ceremonies performed each year in Lhasa before 1959 on the 24th of the first month (Richardson 1993: 39–49; Nebesky-Wojkowitz [1956] 1998: 482, 495ff).[8] In these cases, the ritual involved a whole community rather than a person. Conversely, in the household practices carried out on the 29th day of the last month before the New Year, the substitute is a tiny *chang bu* or fistful of dough that has been passed over and around a person's body to acquire their various forces or energies.

But in most other cases, especially since about 1979 when the Chinese authorities ended some two decades during which all or most forms of religious practice were suppressed, the ritual has involved the

[6] A particularly lucid discussion of the relationship between Bon and Buddhist practitioners with relation to healing and exorcism practices in Sikkim is given in Balikci-Denjongpa 2006. The author notes that here Bon is a local term referring to village ritual traditions, some of which are shamanistic, rather than to Bon or any particular religion—see Balikci-Denjongpa (2006: 140, n. 12).

[7] For the Lhasa ceremony, see Holdich (1906: 310–12); Asboe (1936); Richardus (1998: 103); Richardson (1993: 61–71); Nebesky-Wojkowitz ([1956] 1998: 284, 362, 508-11); Imaeda (1979); Karmay (1998b: 348–66); Lopez (1998: 232–33); Guidoni (1998). The Gyantse ritual is described in Macdonald (1930: 203).

[8] Lucy Hornby photographed and has generously shared her notes on a ceremony with life size effigies in Ba langs gsum mo (Ch. Balong) near Lha sgang (Ch. Tagong) in Kham/Sichuan in 2005, one of the first recorded instances of a ceremony of this kind in Tibetan areas since 1959. See Photoset 12 (October 5, 2005, Sichuan).

Fig. 2: The human substitute or *glud 'gong* being 'driven out' of the city in the *glud 'gong rgyal po* ceremony in Lhasa on the 29th of the second lunar month in 1937, 1938 or 1940. He wears goatskin robes, waves a black yak tail and has his face painted half white and half black. People in the crowd throw money or old coins towards him (probably to get rid of bad fortune). Photographed by Hugh Richardson. The Tibet Album, Pitt Rivers Museum. Accessed 12 Apr. 2009 ttp://tibet.prm.ox.ac.uk/photo_2001.59.9.12.1.html.

construction of a miniature effigy of the affected person, often as a recognisable resemblance of that individual. Other forms of the ritual—depending on the text that is used—require the construction in miniature of a generic person only, and some texts call for an effigy of the troublesome spirit to be displayed alongside that of the patient.

As we shall see, some forms of the ritual do not offer the individual sponsor or an effigy of the sponsor as the principal ransom, but present generic qualities of humans, wealth and other desirables, which are also sometimes represented by effigies. In fact, although the most striking part of the process to an outsider is the figure resembling the patient or the demon, all ransom rituals devote extensive resources to offering ransoms of generic wealth and valuables besides the patient's body, contributing greatly to the complexity and richness of the practice.

There are a great number of forms of *glud* practice, and it can be performed for animals, places and objects as much as for humans. The *rta*

glud is a substitute offering for treating afflicted horses, the *lo glud* is performed for ransoming the harvest or the effect of inauspicious years, the *byis pa'i gdon glud* seeks to protect children by offering a ransom to *gdon* spirits, the *phyugs glud* protects livestock from harmful forces (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 361–62), and the *glud rdzong* is performed to defend the sending off of the ransom, to name but a few.[9] There are other specialist forms of *glud*, such as *'chi glud* or *'chi bslu* to prevent death (Kvaerne 1985; Mengele 2009), the *bla glud* to bring back a person's soul (described in Karmay 1998a; Millard 2005: 26–28), and the *srog glud*, to recover a person's life force.

The term *mdos* is found frequently in connection with *glud* practices. It is used by some people to refer specifically to the 'threadcross' (sometimes called a 'God's eye' in America), a wooden frame, often in the shape of a cross, out of which a four-sided diamond or lozenge shape is formed by stretching woollen strands tightly between the struts of the frame to make a web of usually five or more colours (see Nebesky-Wojkowitz [1956] 1998: 366–97). The threadcross is often perched atop a pole or stick that protrudes from the dough behind the main figure or from the house behind him or her. A tuft of cotton or wool is usually fixed to the protruding ends of the struts at the three exposed corners of the threadcross. It is considered by some foreign writers to be a form of spirit-trap, a mechanism that catches demons, such as described in Lessing's early study (1951), but Karmay (1998a: 329–30, n. 75) denies that such a concept can be found in Tibetan writing. It also functions in some cases as a substitute or ransom offering itself, in which sense it stands for space, the sky, the mind, life, or the life-force (the Tibetan word for it, *nam mkha'*, means 'sky'). In the later Buddhist rituals, a more complex, metaphysical explanation is offered, according to Beyer: the threadcross is a symbolic substitute for the entire universe presented as an ultimate offering, as well as a

---

[9] These categories are given in the on-line catalogue of the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, which assigns topic numbers and lists of available texts online for each of these: *rta glud*—T1619; *lo glud*—T1634; *glud chog*—T2610; *byis pa'i gdon glud*—T1CZ24; phyugs glud—T1CZ25; *glud rdzongs*—T1CZ9, and *mdos glud* (T2415). TBRC also gives lists of different types of *mdos* besides the *mdos glud*—*bskang mdos* (T1727), *mdos chen* (T2325), *mdos chog* (T98) also called *dpal mdos, rgyal mdos* (T1CZ22—a ritual for the creation of a threadcross for the rgyal po spirits, according to TBRC, but Karmay (1998b: 358) notes that like the *rgyal po rtse mdos*, these rituals are specifically connected with the appeasement of Pe har), *btsan mdos* (T1CZ23), and *mdos zlog* (T012AG03592), also called *mdos kyi zlog pa*, 'the averting *mdos*', or exorcism rites.

kind of physical ‘support’ for the tantric practitioner’s effort to visualise an entire universe full of pleasures, one into which the spirits are lured through the ‘gate’ of the threadcross during the ceremony.[10]

The threadcross or *nam mkha’* is used in almost all *glud* rituals and is found not just in so-called ‘popular’ rituals but in monastic rituals, official state ceremonies and higher level tantra as well (Blondeau 1987: 101). The term *mdos*, on the other hand, does not describe the threadcross alone, according to Blondeau, but “the totality of ritual constructions and ritual objects and ritual materials which are assembled including, as the case may be, *nam mkha*’” (Blondeau 1990b: 95, cited in Kvaerne 1995b: 7). It also refers to a broad range of rituals of which the *glud* practices are a part, which in some cases (such as the *brgya bzhi* and *nag po mgo gsum* rituals) show Chinese or Indian influences as well as pre-Buddhist Tibetan ones (Blondeau 1990a: 114–15). In many accounts, the *mdos* represents or reconstructs an entire universe, and Karmay says the *mdos* is a residence for spirits and a gateway to their domains, and that it represents a “palace or more often a universe” (Karmay 1998b: 339). In some more elaborate ceremonies, the *mdos* includes the construction of and is sometimes equated with a three-dimensional palace made from thread stretched across elaborate frames, sometimes several metres in height, as seen in the *rgya nag spyi mdos* carried out at *Pha ri zam pa* in Bhutan (Dorjee 2003). [11]

One group of ransom rituals is those termed *mdos glud*, a term which is sometimes translated as ‘threadcross ransoms’.[12] The *Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo* of ’Jam mgon Kong sprul (1813–99) gives a list of thirty-four rituals belonging to this group. These include the ‘four hundreds offering’ (*brgya bzhi cho ga*, where a hundred lamps, a hundred items of food, a hundred *tsha tsha* or miniature clay images, and hun-

[10] “The demons are fooled or cheated by the visualization and recitation of the practitioner into accepting the portrait [or effigy] as a substitute object of malevolence and are coerced into enjoying their prize in the separate dimension created for them” (Beyer 1978: 329).

[11] A group of monks from Rnam rgyal monastery in Dharamsala constructed a three-dimensional threadcross palace for exhibition purposes at the Herbert F. Johnson Museum at Cornell, Ithaca in September 2007. Here part of a clearly Buddhist project, it was described as a *maṇḍala* or dwelling for a deity and apparently unconnected to ransom or exorcism.

[12] The *mdos glud* group of practices is defined by the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center (TBRC) as the category of “rituals for clearing … obstacles through the use of threadcrosses and effigies”. See http://www.tbrc.org/kb/tbrc-detail.xqoujsession-id=283A4F3E83FFE0CCA26DA3D4AF7BE9F0?RID= T2415, accessed December 29th 2008, for this and the list from the *Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo*.

Fig. 3: Two of the figures from the *rgya nag spyi mdos* carried out at the Astrology Institute at Pha ri zam pa (Bhutan) to repel obstacles and for the welfare of the country, the clergy and the Royal Family, March 2009. Photograph: Françoise Pommaret

dred *ngar mi* or empowered-effigies are offered to clear obstacles); 'the *mdos* of the Twelve *brtan ma* Protector-Goddesses', 'the Practices of the White Flaming Mouth Queen', 'the *mdos* for the *btsan* or Violent Spirits', 'the *mdos* of the Mother Deities', 'the *mdos* of the Four Continents', 'the *mdos* of the Full Eight Classes of Gods and Spirits', 'Hundred Pieces of Flesh, Hundred Pieces of Dough', 'the Ransom-Dispatching of Men and Cattle', 'the *mdos* of Three Types of *gdon* Demons', 'the Pollution Ransom', and 'Dedicating the Ransom to the *gshin 'dre* Ghost'.[13] There are hundreds of similar rituals and ritual categories, each with its own text composed by a different master for use in different situations, often depending on the type of obstacle or illness

[13] *Brtan ma bcu gnyis kyi mdos; kha 'bar ma dkar mo'i lag len; btsan mdos; ma mo'i mdos; gling bzhi spyi mdos; sde brgyad khengs mdos; sha brgya zan brgya; mi phyugs glud rdzong; gdon gsum mdos; grib glud; shi 'dre glud bsngo.* The list is at *Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo*, 69 verso.

deemed to be involved, and most particularly on the type of spirit thought to be source of the obstacle.

The practices that are described as *glud* involve many other concepts that are not strictly limited to the notion of ransom. Principal among these is the notion of deceit, and many scholars say that the word *glud* is related to *bslu ba*, meaning to deceive, cheat, seduce, mislead or decoy (Karmay 1998b: 340; Tibet Translation Tool: Valby, Waldo, Barron). The conflation of these two notions is found in practice as well as vocabulary, because in the ritual texts the notion of an equitable exchange, which is how the idea of a ransom is described, is frequently interwoven with the notion of deception (Lopez 1998: 227).

1. Sources of the Ritual

Ransom rituals are part of the vast and undefined tradition of early indigenous religious practices among Tibetans that R. A. Stein defined as “the nameless religion” (Stein 1972: 191ff.), and which Per Kvaerne and some other scholars regard as prevalent within all Tibetan religious beliefs while not being what some term “an essential part” of either Bon or Buddhism (Kvaerne 1995a: 10). Mueggler describes the elaborate use of effigies, made mainly out of shaped twigs and plants, in exorcism rituals in the Yi community he studied in south-west China in the 1990s (2001: 212–24). Some physical signs of related early practices have been identified—the archaeologist Yu Xin has discussed the numerous wooden figurines shaped like notched tent pegs that were found by Aurel Stein (1862–1942) and others along the Chinese part of the Silk Road outside the Great Wall, including along the Buddhist trade routes (Stein 1921, vol. 2: 776; 1928, vol. 2: 178–79). These peg-figures—painted with prominent beards, protruding noses and a fierce display of teeth—are known in Chinese as *dairen* or ‘human substitutes’ and were stuck into the ground at intervals along the outer side of the Great Wall or in the walls of a fort to repel human and spiritual enemies; Stein suggested that some may date from the 20th century BCE.[14] It is not possible to say if these figures were used in ways similar to the *glud* effigies; maybe they were simply meant to terrify intruders, or per-

[14] Gregory Scott, “Notes: Yu Xin”, notes on lecture on November 15th, 2007 by Professor Yu Xin of Fudan University on “From Turfan to Nara: Figurines Discovered along the Silk Road.” December 07, 2007 The Center for Buddhist Studies weblog. http://www.cbs.columbia.edu/weblog/2007/12/yu-xin-from-tur.html.

Fig. 4: Two peg-figures or *dairen* (human substitutes) of the type found in archaeological excavations in sites along the route of the Silk Road, as well as near the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) foundations of the Great Wall. Courtesy of the International Dunhuang Project (item no. MAS.739, 740)

haps they were related to those precursors of the *phur ba* ritual which Cantwell and Mayer described as "simple non-sacrificial magical acts of overpowering enemies with a *kīlaka* or peg" (2006: 4).[15] But the Tibetan use of *glud* or human effigies as ransoms with spirits is certainly very old, and the Dunhuang manuscripts include at least eight texts describing such rituals.[16] As Snellgrove wrote of the references to the ransom practices he found in Bon texts, "their extraordinary variety tes-

[15] Cantwell and Mayer add, "Typically classified within traditional Indian magical categories as *kīlanam* 'piercing' or *uccāṭana* 'eradicating', such practices are seen as especially effective against demonic forces or opponents in a dispute" (2006: 4).

[16] According to Dalton and van Schaik's online catalogue of Dunhuang manuscripts at the British Library, ITJ 419 (Section 3) discusses "the 'ransom *gtor ma*' (*glud gtor*), offered to the obstructive demons. After violently summoning these demons, the offerings are made to appease these demons. The demons are then told that, having accepted the offerings, if they again cause harm, the offering 'will become your hell-water. If your vows are transgressed, it will burn. If your vows are observed, the siddhis

tifies to their importance in early Tibetan religion" (Snellgrove 1967: 10).

In the later forms of the Bon tradition, which Kvaerne dates from the 10th or 11th centuries, the ransom practices retain a prominent place among the rituals listed as important for practitioners and specialists. One of the major texts in that tradition—the *Gzi brjid* ("the Glorious"), the long form of the biography of the Bon founder, Ston pa Gshen rab—divides the practices of the Bon *gshen* or priest into nine 'Ways' (*theg pa*) or sets of religious techniques.[17] In the first Way—the 'Way of the Practitioner of Prediction' (*phywa gshen theg pa*)—four techniques are listed, of which the third is ritual (*gto*). Among these gto rituals, the fourth of the four forms of ritual is the "'Exchange' Rite".[18] The text, as translated by Snellgrove, describes the standard *glud* practice succinctly:

---

will be achieved by your eating this vajra ambrosia' (Vf. 4r.5-4v.2)." (ITJ stands for "India Office Library Tibetan J".) In ITJ 420 the text makes "injunctions to the spirits to come (to the place where the ritual is being performed) while avoiding the three poisons and to adopt an attitude of compassion. After the recitation come the instructions on the actual practice of the ritual (12v.2). First a general offering *gtor ma* (*mchod sbyin gi gtor ma*) is offered. Then a ransom *gtor ma* (*glud gtor chen po*) is offered up for all the debts of past lives of all beings including "blood debts" (*sha mkhon*)." ITJ 569 is "a short *gtor ma* ritual for taming harmful (*gnod*) and obstructing (*bgegs*) spirits. The ritual contains long sections to be recited to the offending spirits. The first part concerns the ransoming (*glud*) and repayment (*skyin ba*) of the various debts of the person for whom the ritual is performed." ITJ 570 (Section 3) "is the ransom offering (*glud gtor*) for karmic creditors (*lan chags*)." ITJ 572 is "a brief manual for the performance of a *glud gtor* rite". ITJ 795 contains "invocations to *glud kyi rgyal po*" (the king of ransoms), according to *Stein Tibetan 3rd Expedition*, the catalogue by F.W. Thomas placed online at http://idp.bl.uk. ITM 244 discusses magic and *glud* practices. The term occurs at least once in ITM 151, ITJ 419, 562. Old Tibetan Documents Online (http://otdo.aa.tufs.ac.jp) shows that ITJ 0734 is a major discussion of the glud practice, and that the term *glud* appears once in Pelliot 1042, 1134, 1287, ITJ 0733, ITJ 0738, and 0740.

17 Snellgrove dates the text to the 14th century but considers the rituals described in the first and second ways to be of much earlier origin (Snellgrove 1967: 11). The first four of these 'Ways', known as 'the Bon of Cause' (*rgyu'i bon*), deal with improving conditions in this current world, as distinct from the last five sets, which constitute 'the Bon of Effect' and deal with conditions beyond this world.

18 The third of the four forms of ritual in the first Way, which is called by Snellgrove the "'Stinging' Rite" (*bsnun pa'i gto*), seems to be very similar to the fourth form. It isto be applied when beings (including animals and gods) "are struck with an impediment and come near to death." In this ritual, "life-ransoms (*tshe bslu*)" and "life-ransoms [life-repayments?] (*tshe skyin*)" are given "as payment for life (*srog glud*)" and so allow a person to be "ransomed from death (*'chi ba bslus*)" (Snellgrove 1967: 35).

> For all living beings,
> Afflicted with attacks by the eight kinds of sprite,
> By hating and consuming gods and demons,
> You must perform the 'Exchange' Rite (*brje gto*) of transposing two equal things.
> Prepare the ritual devices (*mdos*) and ritual items (*yas stags*),
> The right sized figurine (*ngar mi*) as ransom (*glud*) for the [patient's] body,
> The sky [symbol], the tree [symbol], the arrow, distaff [spindle], and the ritual stakes (*shing ris*),
> The male figure, the female figure, the rock-plant *mtshe*, and mustard-seed,
> [A model of] the house and its wealth, the things one desires.
> If they are exchanged as equal things, the ransom will be good (*mnyam gnyis brjes na glud re bzang*).
> It they are transposed as equivalents, they will be chosen as payment (*mtshungs gnyis bsor na skyin re 'dam*).
> To the hosts of noble buddhas
> Make salutation, offerings and prayer for refuge.
> Then offer the items of ransom, explaining them truly (Snellgrove 1967: 37).[19]

Here we see all the principal notions of the practice: that certain ailments are caused by spirits; that a form of exchange with a spirit can alleviate ailments induced by that spirit; that the success of the transaction depends on the value of the items prepared as ransom; that the prepared items must have equivalent value to that which is requested in return; that precise instructions for their preparation need to be followed; that one offers "the things one desires"; and that other, beneficial or protective deities such as Buddhas are invoked as part of the process. Above all, it shows that the ransom is actually an array of items besides the patient's body, including especially representations of the sky, the two genders, and a house; and that an essential part of the process is "explaining" or articulating verbally the desirable qualities of the items offered for exchange.

Potentially much earlier references are indicated in myths and legends that have similar accounts. One is found in Chapter 9 of the *Gzer mig*, the intermediate length biography of Ston pa Gshen rab, where the

---

[19] Ransom practices also constitute four of the twelve "exorcisms by transposing equivalents (*mnyam gnyis bsor ba'i bar sel*)" which make up the first form of ritual in the second Way—the Way of the Shen of the Visual World (*snang gshen theg pa*)—and all of the third form of ritual, "ransom by equal exchange (*mnyam brje glud*)" (Snellgrove 1967: 42ff).

Bon patriarch criticises a soothsayer for seeking out a Bon ritualist who "knows how to send someone as ransom" (*glud du gtong shes pa'i bon po*) in order to cure an ailing prince called Khri-shang—the Bon po crucifies and slices up a boy of the same age as the prince. The story is designed to show the folly of human sacrifice (the prince and almost everyone else in the story die as a result) and to allow Ston pa Gshen rab to demonstrate the correct ways of ransoming a person's life (Kvaerne 1985: 9–10).[20]

Some of these myths of ransom, taken from Bon texts, have been described by the contemporary scholar Samten Karmay in a series of papers published in his volume of collected works, *The Arrow and the Spindle* (1998), named after the two symbols used in these rituals to indicate the primary genders. According to one legend, found in the Old Tibetan Chronicle (PT 1287), the eighth Tibetan King, Gri gum btsan po, who probably lived in the fifth century (Kirkland 2003: 183), is murdered by his minister, who throws the corpse into the Nyang chu river. There a *klu* (a serpent-like water-spirit or *nāga*, to use the Sanskrit term) seizes it as it floats by. Meanwhile, the king's two sons have been banished towards Kong po in southern Tibet, and have been made to leave their kingdom riding an ox. On their way, they see that the *klu* has taken their father's corpse. They attempt to recover it. The *klu* demands a ransom or forfeit (*glud*) in return for the corpse: it must be a child whose eyes close from bottom to top, like those of a bird. A girl is found with these features and is offered in exchange for the king's corpse (Karmay 1998b: 348, 367–68; Hill 2006: 95, Cutler 1991: 171).

In this account, the exotic or specialist aspect of the story—the element that requires consultation with an expert—comes from the bizarreness of the spirit's value system: the fact that what it most wants is a child with what sound somewhat like nictitating eyelids. This suggests that, although specialist knowledge or access is required in order to know what it is that spirits value, the relationship between the human and the spirit worlds is one of open, evident transaction, a kind of negotiated exchange, an apparently rational bargaining process. But although the value of the exchanged goods might be equal, in the mind

20 Kvaerne cites Hoffman H., *Quellen zur Geschichte der tibetishen Bon religion*, Wiesbaden (1950: 180) as the earliest translation of this story into a western language. Kvaerne provides an illustration showing a detail from a *thangka* (Musée Guimet MA-126) about this story in *Tibet Bon Religion*, Plate III, and in Plates VII-IX he shows photographs by Martin Brauen of the making of *glud* by a Bon abbot in Northern India in 1981 (Kvaerne 1985: 27–28).

of the spirit who is meant to accept them, the terms of the transaction are not: in these stories the spirit holds what the human desperately needs, usually his or her life, and the spirit can choose to refuse the offer of an exchange. The spirit loses little or nothing apart from a variety of pleasure if the exchange succeeds, but the human could lose everything if it fails, so the transaction is weighted in favour of the spirit, and with acute stress on the human side. Thus the object given is not a simple exchange but a ransom—a request for exchange with someone powerful marked by pleading that they accept a substitution of supposedly equal value, one that they might desire but do not need, in return for something the supplicant needs desperately.

Karmay (1998b: 343; 366) refers to collections of such foundational *glud* legends or myths, known as *glud rabs*, each of which describes an earlier exchange between a human and a spirit. Lopez (1998: 225) notes that some much later texts invent their own historical precedents, such as an exorcism text based on the *Heart Sūtra*, which describes the Buddha himself as having once given a ransom to spirits. In Karmay's view (1998b: 339), the *glud* rituals develop as reconstructions of these originary accounts, such as that of the recovery of the corpse of Gri gum btsan po. These rituals seem, however, to be not just re-enactments of a lesson learnt from an earlier account that are effective because they are structurally similar, but active re-invocations of the same personalised relationship between the individual spirit and the individual human priest or intercessor described in that account. As Karmay puts it, "the priest justifies his ritual action and ensures its efficacy by identifying himself as the bearer of a tradition traceable to a master said to be the mythical founder of the ritual" (1998b: 339).[21] The human specialist who carries out a ritual of exchange has inherited his or her position through a descent lineage of some sort, as is indicated by the fact that many ritual texts (and other kinds of texts) begin with invocations of the writer's teaching lineage. To give a western analogy, this would mean not so much that I use a Ouija board to talk to a spirit because I have seen or heard of my father or my teacher using a similar device and strategy in the past, but that because I am my father's son or my

[21] "Such linkage of myth with ritual was not very commonplace in Vajrayāna, but Karmay believes it was an absolutely invariable requirement of indigenous Tibetan ritual, which was structured around a charter myth system known as *dpe srol* and *smrang*. Here, the ritual narrative or *smrang* re-enacted and reaffirmed the underlying explicatory myth or *dpe srol*" (Cantwell and Mayer 2006: 4, citing Karmay 1998: 245).

teacher's disciple I am able to call on that spirit through a Ouija board—I am able to invoke a pre-existing relationship between the spirit and my father or teacher because of my connection by descent from them. This helps explain why so many masters wrote different *glud* or similar ritual texts, and why the precedents, such as Padmasambhava's taming of this or that spirit, are so often cited: each ritual describes a particular relationship between that master and a spirit, or more often a particular, specialist knowledge of that spirit's values and desires, because of which another exchange on the same terms can be proposed and enacted between successors of that master and the spirit.

2. The Practice and the Liturgy

The central presumption of the practice is that there are spirits, and that some of these can do harm to humans, localities, environments and whole communities. The spirits are invisible but are present in the material world, usually attached to specific locales like a particular mountain, tree, lake, home or hearth, and are often harmful. Numerous texts attempt classifications of these forces. Some divide them into two groups, such as the *'dre* or *gdon*. A threefold system divides them into the white *lha* that reside in the sky, the red *btsan* and the yellow *gnyan* that reside in the intermediate realm, and the blue *klu* that dwell under the earth (Millard 2005: 12; citing Tucci 1980: 167, Stein 1972: 204). There is a famous eightfold classification known as the *lha srin sde brgyad* ("eight types of *lha* gods and *'dre* demons") and a list of ten types of gods and demons includes *klu, gnyan, sa bdag, btsan, rgyal po, bdud, ma mo, gza', gnod sbyin*, and *lha*.[22] In some cases it is said that a few of these spirits were converted to Buddhism by a major tantric master such as Padmasambhava, of which a number are sometimes said to have lapsed from their higher states because of the more degenerate times we live in (Balikci-Denjongpa 2006: 150), but most remain unenlightened and easily stirred by base emotions.

Before a ransom ceremony takes place, other options will usually have already been tried. Often medical help or any other obvious efforts will have failed to cure the patient or remove the obstacles, and a doctor might have advised that the causes of the ailment are not treatable

[22] See Blondeau (1971), Karmay (2003), Steinmann (2003), Pommaret (2003).

either by medicine or by religious practices such as performing prayers or pilgrimage, meaning that they are not simply the result of karmic factors. Tibetan medical texts are quite specific about those conditions which cannot be cured by medicine, and in the second of the nine "branches" listed in the main Tibetan medical texts which discuss the causes of illness, the four contributory causes (*rkyen*) of illness are listed: seasons, harmful spirits, diet and behaviour (Millard 2005: 17). Illnesses of the second type, those caused by harmful spirits, are known sometimes as *gnod pa* and might affect the body's humours or produce what might be called psychological disorders. These might be a result of some kind of human activity that offended a spirit such as cutting down a tree, a polluting activity such as working with dead bodies which thus led to the accumulation of *sgrib* or pollution, or the anxiety of the after-spirit or *gshin 'dre* of a person who has died but not been able to transmigrate (Millard 2005: 19; Balikci-Denjongpa 2006: 143–49).[23]

In these cases, a specialist—often an astrologer (*rtsis pa*) or a lama—will usually have been asked to make a calculation as to which spirit or spirits are the cause of the patron's obstacles. This is usually done through divination, such as by throwing a *mo*. In some cases, different specialists from other traditions might be consulted to see if they can see the cause of the problem—for example, a *lha 'bab* or local oracle

[23] In some cases the Tibetan doctor analyses the pulse or the urine to get some indications of the likely spirit involved. Millard describes a case in Northern India in the late 1990s: "The procedure involves the patient urinating into a flat bottomed round bowl. If the patient is male, the urinating must be done in the east direction; if female, in the west direction. The container is then turned around hundred eighty degrees and placed on the ground. Four thin sticks are placed over the container dividing the surface of the urine into nine sections. Each section is associated with a category identified as the source of the harmful spirits. The Tibetan doctor must observe the shape and location of any material suspended in the urine (*ku ya*), and the shape and location of the surface film (*spris ma*). If either of these two items is located in one of the nine sections then this indicates the source of the affliction. The Tibetan doctor may also use the power of his or her own *yi dam* to identify the relevant section. Amchi Gege explained that after invoking the *yi dam* the doctor spits in the direction of the urine and whichever section is struck directly is the source of the affliction. Another method is for the doctor to use nine grains, only one of which is black. The doctor drops one grain into each section without knowing the colours of the grains. The section where the black grain falls is the cause of the affliction. The shape of the suspended material and the surface film can also give direct information about the class of spirits causing the harm. The *Khyung sprul sman dpe* relates eight specific designs for the suspended material and for the surface film to classes of spirits. For example the shape of a scorpion in the surface film signifies the cause to be the *klu* or *bdud*, or if the shape is a deer antler then this indicates the class of the *rgyal po* or *yam shud*" (Millard 2005: 25).

may be asked to go into trance in order for his or her possession-spirit to communicate its concerns or advice or explain those of the harmful spirit, as in the Sikkimese cases described by Balikci-Denjongpa (2006: 145–47; see also Diemberger 2005; note the resemblance here to cases described by Taussig 1993: 9–10). Once the spirit has been identified, plus ideally the probable cause for its intervention, the appropriate liturgy is chosen by the specialist and the *glud* ritual begins.

The liturgy will include at its centre a series of addresses to the spirit that is causing the problem. It will consist of many other texts and ceremonies too, because before the ransom is offered, a complex set of rituals is performed, such as an invocation, the dedication of merit, and so on, and afterwards a further set of prayers and ceremonies will take place. In many cases, enlightened deities or Buddhas, or one's personal *yi dam* or tutelary deity, are invoked, offerings and symbols are empowered before being presented to different forces, and the officiants might visualise themselves as their own or their teacher's *yi dam*, or as wrathful forms of the Buddha surrounded by compassionate Bodhisattvas as mediators, who have been summoned in order to add pressure to the spirit to obey the requests for the ransom. Then a separate ceremony may begin without a break in which the officiants converse with the spirit. This may include recalling legendary cases of ransom exchange, beseeching the spirit to accept the ransom, enticing it to do so by 'explaining'—describing the qualities of the offerings—cajoling the spirit, and finally threatening it with perdition and destruction if it does not obey. In some cases, once the target spirit has been persuaded or ordered to accept the ransom, ancillary procedures might take place, such as pacifying other local spirits like the *sa bdag* or 'lords of the soil' with gifts so that they will not block the road down which the substitutes will be taken on their way to be presented to the target spirit. As Beyer (1978) notes in his detailed description of a Buddhist version of this ritual cycle performed by exiles in Northern India in the 1970s, a circle of protection is then erected "to block the return of the danger", forgiveness is begged for shortcomings in the rituals, merit is dedicated to others, and so on.

In the version by the first 'Jam mgon Kong sprul cited by Beyer, the culmination of the day-long ritual comes with the call on the spirit or spirits to accept the substitutes. There is enforcement as well as enticement, and there are threats as well as pleadings. And we can see how important to the ritual is the explanation section, where the ritualist describes the details of the effigy's construction and the qualities of the

ritual objects that accompany it. Drawing on an important and continuing feature of early Tibetan poetry, the text gives onomatopoeic, performative expression of the excitement that is to be induced by those qualities: as advised in the *Gzi brjid*, the attributes of the offered items are "explained truly":

The eight classes of gods and ogres in the world:
listen to my voice, I who hold the mantra,
do not listen to the instigations of others:
you great evil spirits and hindering demons,
pacify your evil schemes!

The *tormas* that you want,
these many substitutes for life and wealth,
things of the mountain passes,
things of the valleys,
all your desires,
the beautiful turreted house,
the beautiful great swift stallion,
the great mounted portrait of grain,
bearing ornaments of gold and turquoise,
the beautiful ornaments *silili*!
wearing clothes of silk *lhubselhub*!
wise in speech, his face clear and broad, *zhungsezhung*!
wearing a hat on his head *pururu*!
wise in all the arts of play,
the little boots of turquoise *zululu*!
the girdle of gold *tr'ululu*!
his body adorned with "space", tablets, images,
the "male face" and "female face",
speaking with human speech,
the arrows, the cloth, all our desires,
we offer to you as a substitute
for the owner of this fee!

There the many beautiful treasures,
the food of nine flavours, of ten sweetnesses,
his retinue of servants, the thirty little men,
the medicine, the incense, the bright lamps,
we give to you in offering!
Accept this with a willing mind
and avert, turn back
the strength of the magicians
who roll the magic daggers between their palms,
who fling white mustard seed as magic,
who cast their magic weapons,
who prepare for destructive magic (Beyer 1978: 354–55).

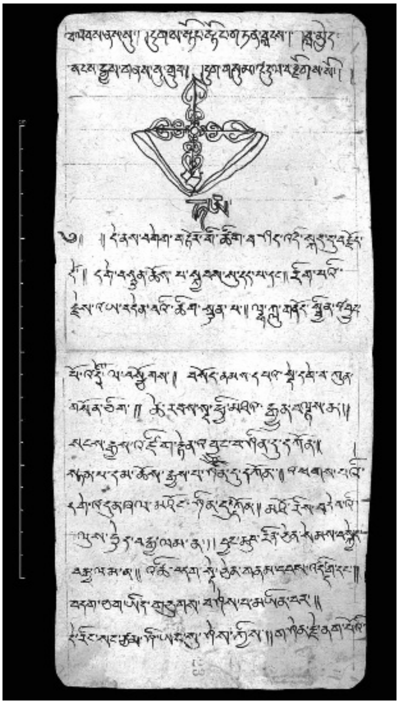


Fig. 5: Part of a manuscript found at Dunhuang describing a *gtor ma* ritual "for obstructing forces" (LVP_1962b: 420 sec2 10v.3). Courtesy of the International Dunhuang Project.

Texts of this kind retain many of the elements found in the very early versions of the liturgy. The Dunhuang *glud* texts similarly offer something desirable but at the same time threaten force if it is not accepted:

> Anyone [or any spirit] that manifestly harms one, summon here to this great effigy cake. By saying, "*ba rdzra Ang dgu sha 'dza pa sha hung spa ta bang 'gan 'de ho*" and making the symbolic hand gesture by touching the ritual cake, all the demons and obstacles are summoned. Their feet are bound. They are placed in shackles. Thinking that they are frightened, having pressed [them] with the bell, recite the mantra and touch the effigy ritual cake with the symbolic hand gesture as is described above, and make the dedication of the five-fold offerings… (Dunhuang ms IOL Tib J 420, fol. folio 12v, lines 6ff.)[24]

Through the repeated utterance of mantras, recitations, and vocalised instructions that describe how the ritual is proceeding, both texts call

[24] Translated with the help of James Gentry and Laura Harrington.

on the spirits to cooperate; their central objective is persuasion or enticement.

But for a human observer, the most striking part of the ceremony is likely to be the near-final stage of the ritual, not much detailed in most texts, when the effigy is taken in a small, often rapid parade away from the home of the ill person or from the monastery or ritual site, and left at a place of 'disposal', where it will be enjoyed by the relevant spirit.[25] An outsider might assume that the offerings or effigy have to be left at another place so that the spirit can decide whether or not to accept them, but that is not the case: the spirit has already made that decision during the course of the ritual, and by this stage it seems the ransom has already been accepted or rejected. The disposal is necessary apparently because of a quite different assumption subsequent to the success of the ransom, one that assumes that when a spirit accepts a ransom, it moves invisibly into it or near it—it inhabits the object of its desire. Many texts are specific about the spirit's inhabiting of the ritual object. This concept may be related to the notion of attachment—that since desire leads to attachment, and since spirits are captive to their feelings, when a spirit desires to have an object, place or person, it becomes utterly, one might say physically, attached to it and dwells within it. Some sources say that the spirit is trapped once it has entered, perhaps by the illusory enjoyment it experiences. The importance of this concept can be seen in the fact that the array of substitute offerings is frequently conceived of in the texts as a palace, realm or entire universe that the spirit is persuaded to enter—it does not just accept an offering, but enters it. In the elaborate later Buddhist versions of the practice described by Beyer, this visualisation of the offerings as an entire world (and of the *nam mkha'* as a doorway to that world) is specified in great detail.

Another assumption goes along with this: that a spirit will be preoccupied with only one object or place at a time. Thus, if it is attracted to the effigy or array of substitute offerings, it will move to or into them and necessarily will leave the body of the patient. This also means that

[25] Karmay argues that "in point of fact, …[the role of the effigy] is to guide (*sna 'dren pa*) the glud which may be represented by a *mdos*… the effigy is supposed to lead the *mdos* out of the house to the dwelling of the spirits to whom the ransom is destined" (1998b: 343). He applies this interpretation to the *glud 'gong rgyal po* ritual in particular. Some processions are definitely led by a person carrying the effigy, but it is not clear that this explanation applies to all forms of ransom rituals.

Fig. 6: A *glud* from a monastery in Southern Tibet, 2005. Photograph: Stephen Hugh-Jones (from Photoset 10).

if a ransom, once accepted, is physically moved to another place, the spirit will travel with it and thus will leave the place or physical space around the person whom it has been afflicting; thus the exorcism will be doubly effective. Not only has a spirit been persuaded to accept a ransom and so to release its human captive, but it has also allowed itself to be removed, perhaps whilst it is absorbed in enjoyment of its new treasures, to another place.

The choice of the place to which the ransom and its new spirit-possessor are removed is of some importance, as are the techniques of the procession from the home to the disposal site. The location, Lopez notes, according to one text,[26]

> depends on the purpose for which the rite is performed. For example, if the rite is for the welfare of a sick person, they [the gifts] are to be put in a cemetery. … If it is for bringing happiness, it is to be placed either

> above or below a crossroads. If a curse is being deflected, they are placed in the direction of the curse. …If one has been harmed by a female devil, it is placed outside the town. If one has been harmed by a *nāga*, they are to be placed at a lake or spring. 'In brief, wherever the harm comes from, deliver it there' (1998: 227).

One can summarise this as meaning that the ransom has to be taken to a place near the residence of the spirit and facing away from where the rite was performed. In addition, it is placed at some distance from the patient's home or the afflicted community, typically outside the precincts of that community, beyond its perimeters. The exact site where the effigy and the threadcross are finally placed is not specified by the texts or the ritual experts; only general direction is given. The primary concern of the experts is the direction in which the ransom offerings must be taken when they are carried from the home or location of the sick person. That direction (and sometimes there might have to be more than one parade in more than one direction, each with a different array of ransom offerings) is calculated by a specialist—an astrologer, for example, will do it on the basis of the patient's birth-sign and other factors. The effigy is carried in the determined direction by a person from the household, ideally a young adult man (very young people, and women too, are more vulnerable to the risk of becoming a new host or target for the spirit). It is then usually laid down at the first crossroads or river, or other type of place required by the text, that the bearer comes to as he walks in that direction.

The reason for choosing a crossroads, cemetery or riverbank is sometimes said to be because these are the places where spirits congregate.[27] This is also reported of effigies left at crossroads in certain other cultures.[28] But why would this be necessary, given that the ritual texts say the spirit has already accepted the ransom during the earlier ceremony? It seems that in the practice of disposal by lay people can be

[26] The *Yum rgyas 'bring bsdus gsum gyi don bsdus shes rab snying po'i sgo nas bdud bzlog gi rim pa* attributed to Kumārabuddha and Dbu dkar ba of [S]kyi ljang (Lopez 1998: 218–19).

[27] Tenzing Rigdol, personal communication, October 10th, 2007.

[28] According to the Canadian occultist Kerr Cuhulain, "First of all crossroads are significant in several mythological systems. The crossroads were considered to be territory that belonged to no one. It was a place outside the borders of town and village. For this reason it was often considered to be a suitable place to perform magick. It was at crossroads that one found priapic marker stones for the god Hermes. In Roman mythology Mercury was the guardian of the crossroads. In India the god Bhairava was

Fig.7: A cow and a goat disposing of a *glud gtor* in a Lhasa Beer box at a crossroads in Tibet. Photographer and exact place unknown.

seen traces of much earlier practices—the voiced rituals carried out by specialists using texts and skill in language actually partake of a related but slightly different logic from those in the *glud rabs*. The parade and the disposal at the outer place seem to retain the rationale of legendary accounts in which the ransom was carried to the physical abode of the spirit, such as a riverbank, and left there to be possessed. But for

---

said to guard the crossroads and stone phalluses and statues of his eye were erected in such places. In Africa one can find guardians of the crossroads in every cultural group. These deities include Legba, Ellegua, Elegbara, Eshu, Exu, Nbumba Nzila, and Pomba Gira. Such African deities not only guard the crossroads but also open the way and teach wisdom. In Hoodoo [an African-American tradition] there are several practices connected to crossroads: Remnants of rituals such as candle wax drippings, incense ashes, dirt from footprints, or ritual bathwater are disposed at the crossroads. One is supposed to throw it into the intersection and then walk away without looking back" (http://www.witchvox.com/va/dt_va.html?a=cabc&c=whs&id=6211). See also Verger (1981) for discussion and photographs of effigies used in Orixas practices in Brazil, based on Yoruba deities.

complex reasons, the ransom ritual has evolved into itself becoming a substitute for that practice, so that in the specialists' ritual almost all the transactions take place in psychic space. The ritualist is considered to have the ability, we might say the technology, unlike the legendary heroes, to summon the spirit to the trading place and to make it inhabit or take possession of the ransom during the ceremony in the home; the process in the legendary accounts, with their journey to the spirit's dwelling place, has been streamlined and transformed in the later rituals by the specialists. This ability is implicit in the basic claims of all ritual practitioners in Buddhism and the other religious traditions in Tibet.

Accordingly, another explanation is often given as to why the ransom has to be taken elsewhere: once the offerings decay or are destroyed, or if the spirit considers (or realises) that it has been deceived, so it is said, the spirit will lose interest and try to return to the previous victim. From this perspective, crossroads and riversides are explained as confusing places from which a spirit cannot retrace its steps; once placed there, it is dislocated. From these places, it is assumed, the spirit cannot or will not find its way back to the afflicted patient or community. This is the view most commonly found among contemporary lay people, but does not seem to be present in the ritual texts.

The final difficulty for the *glud* practitioner is how to prevent the spirit, once it and its new ransom-residence have been disposed at the perimeters of the community, from returning to the place it has just left. For this reason, the bearer of the ransom figures is told not to look back during the parade, or especially after the inhabited offerings have been laid down at the disposal site, since the spirit or negative force would then follow his or her eyeline back to the afflicted person and their home. As Beyer (1978) showed in his description of the Tārā rituals, there are other, more elaborate procedures in some Buddhist forms of the ransom ceremony for preventing the return of the danger, such as visualising a circle of protection. But that kind of practice is for specialists. For ordinary people, the risk is at its greatest firstly when the *rtsam pa* offerings have been deposited by the bearer at the disposal site, and secondly when those offerings deteriorate or are destroyed. This is presumably because they will then no longer hold the interest or the presence of the spirit, which may then recall how to return to the source of pleasure it knew and desired immediately before. Thus the ransom

offering has to be destroyed or allowed to deteriorate in a place and manner which does not allow the spirit to find its way back to the previous location. In some cases, it is clear that people believe that the quicker the offerings are destroyed after disposal, the less risk there is of the harm returning and the more auspicious the ritual is likely to be considered. But a second risk of return arises once the substitutes disintegrate and are no longer attractive. Placing the objects, and the spirit with them, at a crossroads or junction, in or beside running water, resolves this problem because from such places several routes run and thus the spirit cannot identify by which route he or she arrived.

These understandings are found in lay, oral tradition rather than in texts, and along with the lay parade and the practice of disposal, may be vestiges of much earlier forms of the ransom process than the thinking underlying the sophisticated technology deployed in the specialist rituals, although these days the lay explanations for their actions may differ from those implied in the early legends: a ransom is still taken to a spirit's dwelling place but explained as removing from the community a dangerous object that specialists have caused to be inhabited by a spirit. The disposal practice in the *glud gtor* rituals is thus a reminder that these rituals are complex composites that do not simply reproduce the practices or the forms of logic found in originary legends. Those trace elements are intermixed with other concepts and traditions and reshaped within different sections of communities, producing a layering of rationale and practice that creates a sedimented structure of meanings that evolve over time.

3. The Central Figure and the Array

The most striking element of a ransom practice is the effigy that is the central figure in the display offered to the troublesome spirit. That figure is rarely found alone. Usually it is surrounded by a retinue of other figures, consisting of humans, animal and sometimes spirits, and that retinue in turn is surrounded by an arrangement of objects representing the household, its possessions and valuables, and the wider universe. Here I use the term 'array' to describe the entire assemblage of items and figures including the effigy that constitute the complex tableau presented as the ransom offering.

The effigy is usually constructed primarily from *rtsam pa* or parched barley dough and is known in Tibetan as the *glud*, *liṅga* or *tshab* (sub-

stitute), but more precisely as a *ngar mi* or *ngar glud*, a 'power person' or 'power substitute',[29] words which some scholars say have no equivalent in Sanskrit or Indic languages and indicate a separate, perhaps local, origin (Karmay, personal communication, October 2007). These refer to items which are offered as ransoms or substitutes to 'buy back' a person or community. They are usually figurines which are likenesses of the victim or patron for whom the ritual is being performed. This is not always the case: Karmay points out that in the *Glud 'gong rgyal po* ritual, where the effigy is a human being standing in place of the community or its leader, the *ngar glud* or likeness-figure is serving as not the actual *glud* or ransom that is offered, and which need not be an effigy, but as the herald or harbinger of the parade which carries the offered ransom, probably a cake or *gtor ma*, towards the residence of the spirit that has to be appeased (Karmay 1998b: 341–42).

There are also other forms of effigy. In many exorcism rituals, effigies are made to represent the spirit or spirits who are being invited to accept the ransom, as well as, sometimes, an effigy resembling the patron and offered as the ransom. In these cases, the spirits are invited to enter their own effigies in order to be offered the gifts and inducements.[30] In other, much simpler, versions of exorcism rituals, dough is used as a form of substitute for the sick or afflicted person, but as a result of contact with the person rather than through any attempt at resembling them—a ball of dough called a *chang bu* or sometimes another object is rubbed on or around the body of the person and then discarded in some ritual manner. Many Tibetans do this to purge themselves of obstacles at household ceremonies known as *dgu gtor* to mark the end of each year. A highly ritualised, collective example of this type of practice on a larger scale has been given by Kalsang Norbu and others in their description of a *wutu* ritual in a Monguor (Tu) village in Qinghai (Kalsang Norbu *et al.* 1995).

Although the presence of a human likeness is the most frequent and striking element of *glud* practices, it is almost never found alone in

---

[29] Nebesky-Wojkowitz ([1956] 1998: 360); Beyer (1978: 310ff); Karmay (1998b: 341).

[30] Lopez gives a detailed description of this kind of demon-effigy in his discussion of exorcism texts that use the *Heart Sūtra* as the source of their authority. His chosen text says to the relevant demons, "I beseech you to come here just for a little while and abide in your image." Lopez comments "in order that the demons be placated and turned back, they must be made visible and brought into physical presence" (1998: 222), citing Taussig's discussion of mimesis (Taussig 1993: 13).

Fig. 8: A figure of a wrathful deity, probably Dpal ldan lha mo, as part of *glud* array of five figures at a monastery in Southern Tibet, 2005. Photograph: Stephen Hugh-Jones (from Photoset 10).

these rituals. It is almost always surrounded not only by an entourage but by an array of accoutrements. The ritual texts describe the often extremely varied and sometimes obscure objects that must be placed in or alongside the effigy for the ritual to be effective. As in all ceremonies involving deities of any kind, "a great variety of substances and instruments are required in order to carry out the manifold ceremonies whose purpose it is either to please or to pacify the deities and their acolytes," as Nebesky-Wojkovitz reminds us in his classic work, *Oracles and Demons of Tibet* ([1956] 1998: 347). He describes some of the ritual implements that in varying degrees accompany most ransom (and many other) rituals—the conical *gtor ma* cakes, the smaller *bshos bu* cakes, the eighty-four kinds of *zor* or magic weapon each in the shape of a pyramid, and sometimes the magic weapon known as a *khram shing* or hexagonal wooden board (Nebesky-Wojkowitz [1956] 1998: 348–59). There are also the wooden mould called a *zan par* used to print or mould objects out of dough for the rituals, the *khrag mtsho*

Fig. 9: A *zan par* or mould-stick for producing bas-relief figures of humans or animals, with strips of dough from which figures have been pressed, together with a bowl of red dye for painting *gtor ma*. Photograph: Robert Barnett, Sku 'bum, 2007.

or 'blood lake'—a red, round flat cake offered as a libation, the kneaded and wavy-shaped dough ball pressed by hand called the *chang bu*, the *theb kyu* or tetrahedron (triangular pyramid), the divination arrow called the *mda' dar* representing the male principle, and the spindle or *'phang* that stands for the female. Among the ritual implements almost always found in these ceremonies are the *byang bu* 'label' and the *rgyang bu* (Nebesky-Wojkowitz [1956] 1998: 359ff), both flat wooden slabs on which drawn or printed images are affixed, often representing the *pho gdong* and the *mo gdong*, the male and female elements respectively.

We can get a sense of what the array is comprised of by looking at the instructions given in *glud* texts, such as this one from a version of the *Bar do thos grol* translated by Beyer:

> The substitute should be as many fingerbreadths tall as the person who is the object of the ritual is years old; the dough may be made black for the *dü* demons, red for the *tsen* and *lutsen* [a cross between a *lu* and a *tsen* spirit], yellow for the *lu* serpents, *nyen* and *t'eurang* [space spirits, imps], white for the king demons, green for the female *dü* demons, coun-

> try gods, and earth ogres, or any combination of colours; mixed into it should be some of the person's own excrement, pieces of clothing, mucus, saliva, tears, hair, fingernails, and so on, and from that the image should be made… In front of each should be set out a *torma* of the same colour, and as many *ch'angbu* as the person is years old, made out of effigy dough.[31]

Another text, in this case composed by the 3rd Thu'u bkwan Rinpoche in the late 18th century, gives similar instructions:

> Regarding the manner in which the yogin here focuses on such ceremonies as dispelling obstacles for himself and others and casting ransom [effigies], when you obtain the bodily defilements of that which acts as the substitute effigy for the sake of whomever, combine the precious hero with the powder of various grains and medicines. Make a little person from the span of the thumb to the finger complete with the sense-spheres, eyes, form, [and so on]. All around it, [place] small ransoms, small dough offerings, and butter medallions [representing] the number of years or whatever is appropriate. Furthermore, arrange in various poses a collection of whatever goods [there are], such as food and drink, clothes and drink, jewels, and various grains. When you've expanded [that], prepare the construction of a brain of pearls, bones of conch shell, eyes of *lung-tang* medicine and so on, according to the liturgical texts, and place a wheel of the five elements on the heart.[32]

In each case, and even in the oldest texts, multiple items are described which have to accompany the ransom figure. Nebesky-Wojkowitz offers a basic formula for understanding these ritual offerings, which is that they are projections of the target's culture—they are chosen according to what the ritualist believes the target deity or spirit would consider pleasurable and conforming to its nature:

> The form of offerings depends on the nature of the *dharmapāla* [protector spirit] who receives them: a wrathful deity is given a *gtor ma* consisting of meat and bone, a libation of blood and bile, skull-drums and thigh-bone trumpets are played for its entertainment, etc., while a peaceful protector of religion is presented with such gifts as medicines, sweet and good tasting food, fragrant incense, and pieces of silk (Nebesky-Wojkowitz [1956] 1998: 343).

---

31 From a *Bardo tho dol* text cited by Beyer, for which he does not estimate a date (1978: 328–29).

32 From Thu'u bkwan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma (Thukwang Lobsang Chökyi Nyima, the 3rd Thukwang, 1737–1802), *Glud gtor gyi cho ga kun phan 'dod 'jo dang rgyal rdzong lag tu blang bde ba* ("The Ritual of the Ransom Offering, the Wish-ful filling Tree that Benefits All, and the Bliss that will be Practiced [in] the Royal Palace"). Translated by Christopher Bell in personal communication, October 2008.

The fundamental feature of *glud* practices is thus that, like all offerings, they are designed to appeal to the tastes and preferences of the deities or spirits in question. But they have a very particular additional role: they aim to get the spirit to accept the offerings as a substitute for someone or something else that is currently its object of attention. The surrounding figures and objects reflect this dual objective: the enhancement of desirability and the enhancement of credibility. That is, they persuade the spirit that the objects are desirable and valuable, and they persuade the spirit that these objects are equally enjoyable and valuable compared to that which it already has. They persuade it to believe that the objects are as valuable as is claimed.

Representation, and what we may call skill in art, is therefore at the heart of the *glud gtor* project, so much so that it may be considered an important area of Tibetan art in its own right. The complexity of the artistic work involved can be seen if the retinue and the array of surrounding objects that accompany the effigy are considered in their fullness. The entourage or array can be divided approximately into five main groups—representational substitutes, offerings in their own right, metonymic and identity substitutes, markers of sacred geography, and

Fig. 10. A *glud gtor* with *ting lo*, a threadcross and other elements of the array clearly visible. Photograph: Robert Barnett, Lhasa, 2005 (from Photoset 6).

the threadcross, though even this categorisation involves considerable simplification:

(1) The first category of accompanying figures or objects consists of items presented as an entourage of additional beings and objects offered as substitutes for exchange. They are representational substitutes, items that directly represent beings offered in exchange for the person or entities harmed by the spirit, and that are not actually those persons or parts of them. They stand for the actual possessions and associates of the afflicted person, partly because those too might have become the target of the spirit's attentions and so need to be ransomed, and partly to add to the value of the ransom. These can be divided into three categories according to their representational form—three dimensional, two dimensional and half-formed items.

(a) In many cases the substitute figures or objects in the retinue are small, three dimensional creations that have been sculpted from *rtsam pa* flour in the shape of cows or other cattle. In addition, a yak or a horse might be sculpted as the mount for one of the central figures. Usually the house of the afflicted person is depicted in full, three-dimensional form, because it too has to be ransomed, and it is often constructed just behind the main figure. This house is sometimes referred to as the *khang bzang* or "good house", since it is made to look as attractive as possible in order to enhance its exchangeable value.

In some cases two small figures, unclothed and unpainted, will be modelled out of dough to represent the *pho gdong* or "male face" and the *mo gdong* or "female face", and occasionally there will be a miniature arrow (*mda'*) and an actual spindle (*'phang*) among the array of objects. These gendered images are sometimes said to be the substitutes for the males and females in the sponsor's household or community, though more complex explanations are possible: Beyer (1978: 327) suggests, from a Buddhist perspective, that they represent all males and females subject to the influence of the spirit. When the *pho gdong* and the *mo gdong* are represented as three dimensional models the modelling will be deliberately crude, without any suggestion of details or features, and in some rituals their faces are covered with small cloth bags. This may be intended to indicate that they represent a gender in general rather than a particular person. Their presence seems central to the entire family of *glud* rituals, an importance that is reinforced by Samten Karmay's reference to them in the title of his collected works.

(b) More frequently, the secondary figures and objects to be offered as substitutes are represented not by models but by two dimensional images. The most important and common of these are simple black and white outline drawings printed on paper and then fixed to a

rgyang bu or flat tablet or paddle that is placed upright behind and to the side of the central figure.[33] Often a splash of colour is added to these prints by hand. Two will almost always be found behind or beside any effigy: the two-dimensional print or image of the *pho gdong*, which consists of a man in traditional Tibetan dress carrying an arrow, and the *mo gdong*, a picture of a woman in a traditional *phyu pa* or robe carrying a spindle. Sometimes the drawings consist of the arrow and the spindle on their own, in place of the male and female forms, but most frequently these items are added in the pictures of male and female figures as if to explain them by indicating their primary symbolic functions. Between them there will often be a third *rgyang bu* on which a drawing of a house has been fixed or pasted instead of or as well as constructing an actual *khang bzang*.

(c) The substitute figures in the entourage are also found in a half-formed mode—they are pressed out of dough that has been pushed into a wooden mould or *zan par* to produce miniature symbols in bas-relief of large numbers of people, animals, possessions or objects. The wooden blocks or sticks used as moulds often have images carved into them on all four sides to maximise the number of relief-images that can be produced from a single block. Sometimes a force of thirty or so "little men" is pressed out of the blocks into strips of dough, or even made singly from dough (Beyer 1978: 326). Another tier of figures carved into the blocks below the men will sometimes include images of foodstuffs and of various kinds of birds, while a third tier may represent cattle of different kinds, types of deer, and aquatic creatures such as fish, frogs and snakes, or other forms of animals and possessions. As with the other images, fully shaped, printed or half pressed, these are substitutes for real creatures and objects and are presented as ransoms in the afflicted person's retinue, representing their possessions, to free them from interference by the spirit.

(2) The second main category of objects found around the central figure or figures consists of objects that are offerings in their own right. That is, unlike a human body, they have or appear to have inherent, self-evident value. They can be actual valuables like money or jewellery, or representations of actual valuables, like offering cakes, in which cases they are substitutes for those valuables. According to one's interpretation and to the accounts given in individual texts, they can also be substitutes for the entire mass of treasures, foodstocks and valuables possessed by the patient or sponsor. Or, as in most offering rituals in Tibetan and Buddhist traditions, it may be specified in the texts that these items stand for the entirety of valuables of one or other type that can be envisaged as existing in the universe. We can divide these offerings in the *glud gtor* array

[33] See, for example, Photosets 12 (October 2005, Sichuan) and 17 (July 2007, Lhasa).

into two types: actual valuables and symbolic representations of valuables:

(a) Foodstuffs, objects of value, incense and similar items are almost always scattered around the central figure or are arranged carefully beside it. Traditionally gems and precious stones would have been added to the arrangement, and these too could have been either substitutes for the wealth of the afflicted household or offerings in their own right. Many texts, as we have seen, list medicines among these items, typically potent aromatic herbs which are frequently mentioned in the more ancient descriptions of the ransom ceremonies. In many cases different types of grain and pieces of food are scattered over or around the assembly of figures; originally they would have been ground into the paste for making the central figure too. These actual items of edible, mineral or therapeutic value may function as additions to the ransom needed to free the patient or simply as offerings of the more normal kind that are designed just to attract or placate the spirit.

(b) The offerings which are symbolic rather than actual include, as in most Tibetan ceremonies, the *gtor ma* or conical offering cakes. But there are almost always dough-made offering bowls or *ting lo*, which are miniature replicas of offering bowls made out of *rtsam pa* flour and sometimes filled with butter and a lighted wick, with water or with an actual flower or replica of a flower made from painted butter.[34] These are often placed at the foot of the *bgegs gtor* or offering cake presented to the obstacle-spirits. *Bshos bu* or small dough-cakes, *theb chu* or 'buttons', *zor* or 'magic weapons', and other types of representational offerings are often arranged around the main offering-cakes.

(3) A third type of object found near, on, or sometimes in, the central figure may be barely visible. These are not substitutes that through a process of artistic representation stand for something other than themselves, as with the effigies, but are taken from the afflicted person or from his or her clothes. They are substitutes in the sense that they are actual parts of a larger entity—the patient or sponsor—and so stand for that person, and retain that patient's particular identity. The calculus of substitution here is mathematical or metonymic rather than metaphoric: these items presumably help to impart the reality of the afflicted person's presence or identity to the substitutes. From the point of view of the deception project embedded within the ransom rituals (though not always declared), they add what is sometimes called the 'smell' of the

[34] Waldo and Ives (Tibetan Translation Tool) say the *ting lo* are not the dough bowls but the flat, circular disks made from butter, each with a round bead or ball on top of them, also made from butter, that represent food.

victim, a sort of psychic authenticity, to the model and the array. They can be divided into those that are actual physical parts or possessions of the patient or those that contain transferred energy from the patient.

(a) The first type consists of actual parts of the person who is desired by the spirit, as opposed to models or symbols or representing that person. Examples are strands of the afflicted person's hair, drops of their saliva or mucus, and nail clippings. These might be placed amid the array or somewhere near the central figure, or they might be worked into the dough that is used to make the figure.

(b) In many cases objects are included in the array that have acquired through contact the presence of the afflicted person. They bear the physical or psychic traces or imprint of that person rather than being an actual part of them. Thus scraps or threads taken from the patient's clothes are often found among the array or in the dough. In most cases, one also finds a number of *chang bu*, the small cylindrical-shaped pieces of *rtsam pa* dough that have been lightly pressed by the hand of the patient and thus carry the imprint of their fingers on the dough. These are sometimes said to represent the lifespan of the afflicted person or sponsor—one sometimes has to be included in the array for each year of the patient's life—and so might be considered representational rather than actual, metaphors rather than metonyms. But this is not correct: like the strands of hair or scraps of cloth, they are vectors for the patient's specific identity, because they contain the actual energy or life quality of the real person. This has been transferred into the object, as in all forms of substitutional magic. This imparting of specific identity or 'smell' to the array becomes part of the effort to convince the spirit that the substituted objects really are the person or the person's possessions that it seeks.

(4) A fourth type of object in the array stands for the sacred geography of Buddhist and pre-Buddhist ritual, where the central figure or palace is seen as Meru, the mountain at the centre of the universe. Around it, as in Buddhist or Bon cosmology, are rings of smaller mountains or of the four surrounding continents, which are replicated by walls of dough or rows of small cones, sometimes with plants, flowers or cloth banners stuck into them. In such cases, the array is clearly representing a place, not a set of objects plus a person, and that place is the entire universe. A conventional explanation offers a mathematical rationale—that the spirit is being offered an entire universe full of desirable objects rather than a limited number of objects so as to increase the attractiveness of the array. An explanation based in the logic of spirit-ransom sees it as necessary in some cases to present an entire universe to the spirit because its harmful influence may have pervaded the universe rather than just a person or a household, and so a substitute of the same scale must be offered to move it out of its current world-sized dwelling place. A more

Fig. 11: An effigy with the *khram byang* or notched stick and threadcross behind and the four walls or mountains around. The half-pressed figures taken from a *zan par* mould can be seen on the outer wall. Photograph: Hanung Kim, Dharamsala, 2008 (Photoset 20)

complex, moralistic rationale has it that spirits by virtue of their lack of enlightened understanding and their nature are inherently self-deceived and so experience an offered object or array as if it really were an entire universe or paradise. The ritual specialist exploits this ignorance to lure the spirit into the alternate world but is exonerated from any charge of trickery because his strategy leads the spirit to more pleasure, however illusionary.

(5) Behind and above all of the central figures, their home and their entourage is a "threadcross", or sometimes three or more. The wooden struts that form the framework of the threadcross usually have tufts of white cotton or cotton wool fixed to them (some claim that the cotton tufts are meant to catch spirits). The threadcrosses are almost always present as the dominant feature of the array, even if there is no effigy.

Besides these physical objects that are included in the array (and there may be many others required by different texts), there are also invisible

qualities that the ritualist adds to the ransom presentation. The effigy is described as having abilities of speech and action as well as physical possessions and features, and the chants that advertise the ransom offering to the spirit—the function that the *Gzi brjid* termed 'explaining truly'—frequently refer to the effigy-persona as 'wise in speech', as eloquent with words, and as graceful in movement. In some forms of *glud gtor*, a physical human substitute is employed instead of an effigy, but in cases where there is a model, these qualities are demonstrated not through physical performance but, as we have seen, through performative language or onomatopoeia by the narrator. Nevertheless, this emphasises that the exchange is not merely of material value, but includes aesthetic qualities and attributes as well. In this respect, since none of those can be shown in effigy versions of the practice, the ritual is one of persuasion and performance as much as of exchange.

4. Terms of Trade

The success of a ransom thus depends on a number of skills—the knowledge of diagnosis and divination in order to identify the unseen causes of ailments, the ability to construct a convincing effigy, competence in obtaining and arranging the additional ritual objects, dexterity at verbal persuasion, ability at deception, and knowledge of the rules of exchange. These can be reduced at their most basic to the ritual practitioner's insight into the identity of the troublesome spirit and into its trading practices and compulsions: he or she needs to know how to identify and assemble offerings that the spirit considers valuable. These forms of knowledge are intrinsic to any kind of trade, and they become especially valuable when they involve knowledge of a world or culture different from one's own. One can charge money for this knowledge—the *Gzi brjid* tells ritual practitioners that ransom practices "will make you happy with offerings and fees" (Snellgrove 1967: 37)—because it requires knowledge of a specialist set of terms of trade, ones that permit the substitution of one human attribute or object with an inhuman one of equal or greater value, and that can thus persuade spirits to enter into an exchange of goods.

The trading process involves considerable complexity, as it is conducted at the elemental level. That is to say, for purposes of this trans-

action the human is viewed as a combination of components, as in the Buddhist division of the person into *skandhas* or heaps, but with more numerous divisions.[35] The terms of trade mean that each of these components of the afflicted human or entity should be valued and substituted individually. This is part of the tradition of enumeration, as found both in Buddhist textual practices and in standard trading. The primary enumeration in the case of a ransom transaction for a human is of the five elements of the human body, each of which has an equivalent in the ordinary world that can be substituted to replace the human captured by the spirit: the element of breath or vital energy (*rlung*) can be substituted by wind, blood by water, flesh by earth or clay, bodily heat by fire, and life (*srog*) or the mind by the *nam mkha'* (literally, the sky, but here a threadcross) (Blondeau 1988: 75). These elements are often represented in the ransom tableau separately from the effigy by placing water (blood), lamps (fire), the threadcross (life), and other insignia for the elements around it.

Other strategies beside equivalence are used to add value. A *glud rabs* or ransom myth found among the Dunhuang manuscripts, possibly originating from before the 7th century, describes seven kinds of grain being ground up for a ransom ritual and combined with filings of gold, silver, turquoise, copper, iron, rhinoceros horn and conch shell (Karmay 1998b: 345, 1.54).[36] "A *ngar glud* [power substitute or figurine] was made from the paste of this mixture", according to the poem.[37] This paste with its valuable constituents comes to form the body of the effigy; the precious metals and substances apparently add value to that body by being substitutes for its core elements or humours, and at the same time add "power" or strength to the effigy (*ibid.*: 341).

There is an additional, secondary system of exchange that applies to the features, components or attributes of a human, such as the tongue, eyes, teeth and clothes: these can be substituted by objects that resemble those features in shape or colour, ideally ones that are also valuable

[35] Erik Mueggler describes and gives illustrations of the construction of exorcism effigies in a Yi community, where a separate item is shaped for each feature of the spirit, including its kin and social relations. As in the earliest Tibetan forms of effigy-construction, these are mainly represented by plants or shaped twigs of particular trees. These are loosely placed together, sometimes wrapped in cloth or twine, to indicate a single spirit or person in what Mueggler calls, following Deleuze and Guattari, "assemblages" (2001: 212–24).

[36] Pelliot 1285, Karmay (1998b: 343–46, 372–74).

[37] *Ngar zan ngar glud 'phad (?) du gyis* (Karmay 1998b: 373, l. 54).

or rare. The substitution here is partly mimetic, based on resemblance as well as or instead of rarity. We can make a table, based on a longer list supplied by Karmay (1998b: 347–48), of some of the viable commodities allowed as exchanges, both for the principal elements and for the features.

In the older texts, specific aromatic herbs and rare fruits with valuable medicinal qualities were important substitutes too, mainly for internal organs such as the heart or the kidneys; perhaps in some way they were seen as adding an animating effect to the effigy because of their restorative capabilities, much as the precious ingredients in the dough made the *glud* into a *ngar glud*, a substitute with power.

Human component	Substitute in the *glud* economy
- elements -	
life or mind	*nam mkha'* (threadcross)
heat	lamp, flame
blood	water or vermillion
breath	wind
flesh	earth or rhinoceros flesh
- features -	
bone	conch shell
brain	pearl
nose	copper coin
eye	onyx
teeth	cowry
tongue	saffron
feet	iron
clothes	silk

In the foundational myths that Karmay and other writers focus on, the original substitution is of one person for another, or of a live person for a corpse, as if they are of equal value. But usually the substitute person has special features, such as perfect teeth or bird-like eyelids, that make him or her more valuable to the spirit than the person being ran-

Fig. 12: An effigy with a cowry shell used to represent the mouth. Photograph: Robert Barnett, Lhasa, 2006 (from Photoset 14).

somed. Though the texts often refer to the exchange of two equal objects, their constituent elements are not valued equally by both participants, and the spirit is getting something that in its economic system is of greater worth than that which it is being asked to give up.[38] There is a kind of cultural discord that is understood and exploited by the ritual specialist, who has discovered that, for example, nictitating eyelids are of great worth to a *klu* but relatively unimportant to humans, and so can be usefully traded for a king's corpse, which is of much more value to his family and his subjects.

The fact that such features have exceptional value for the spirits is specified in some of the myths, and the later rituals that re-enact those legendary exchanges focus on the special value of these features. The texts reproduce the fascination of the spirits with certain exotic features by focusing on the paraphernalia of a person—his or her clothes, boots,

[38] Though the *Gzi brjid* refers repeatedly to the principle of ransom rituals as the exchanging of items of equal value, Lopez notes that in the *Sher snying bdud zlog* ("Repelling Demons (with) the *Heart Sūtra*"), the effigy is explicitly described as 'more desirable' than the human that it stands for (1998: 227). See also Karmay (1998b: 340, n. 8 and 348, n. 70).

ornaments and attributes—and according them exaggerated value, although in fact the objects or items that are offered are actually of little value to a human or are replicas made of barley flour. There is thus a double substitution: the spirit is persuaded to accept the ritual masters' offer of a substitute or ransom in return for the booty the spirit has stolen or taken possession of, but that substitute is itself substituted: it is made from foodstuffs and other ingredients that have been reshaped to resemble a human, its teeth, life force, or other elements. The foodstuffs replace the substitute-child in the original ransom myths. One could argue that in the spirit world the psychic infusion of these worthless objects with the force of ritual magic or the aroma of a physical person who has touched them makes them real for the spirit. Indeed, as we have seen, some Tibetans say that a spirit sees these representations as if they were reality, and cannot tell the difference (Tenzing Rigdol, personal communication, October 2007)—a kind of disordered or alternative scheme of representation and fascination in the spirit world, much as in the Greek story of Pygmalion. But others see a potential crisis of representation in the ransom process, because it involves a deception that the spirit is always at risk of recognising and avenging. We can see here the slide of meaning between exchange and trickery embedded within the mechanics of the ritual, so that from some perspectives, despite all its desperate gravity and urgency, the exchange involves the ritual master in a kind of deceit or even mockery of the power-holders. As Dollfus writes, following Karmay,

> L'ambiguïté rachat/tromperie est présente dans la notion même de *glud*, qui, selon un texte ancient (8e–9e siècles), "consiste à racheter (ou tromper) au moyen d'une rançon". Elle repose sur l'homonymie des termes et sur le rapport étymologique entre *glud* et *bslu*" (Dollfus 1994: 186; Karmay 1998b: 340).

The ransom ritual is embedded in deep and intriguing ambiguity: it is both an open exchange and a deception, a supplication and an act of threat, a display of credulity at the same time as a deployment of skilful understanding.

The ransom ritual thus mirrors the standard relationship in any form of trade where one party is at a major disadvantage because the other party holds in its hands everything that is vital to it, the subaltern. It is no coincidence that in these situations spirits are powerful, as we see from many of their names—*btsan* means ruler or emperor as well as

violent, *rgyal po* means king, a *sa bdag* is an owner of land or territory. They may be seen as petty rulers, and be known to be ignorant or deceived compared to higher orders of virtue or morality, but in the real or ordinary world they have significantly more power than their human suitors. Attempts to force them into compliance are essentially a trick of performance: they must be begged, persuaded, cajoled or conned into agreement.

However, the supplicant has a potential advantage if he or his ritual consultant has sufficient insight into the spirit's alien concept of value to know how to make a compelling offer for his exchange. We can see that this requires the skill of knowing how the power-holder thinks, what are his or her sources of pleasure, and which forms of pleasure or enticement he or she cannot resist. One's very survival, this seems to say, depends on information and on what we might nowadays call a kind of cross-cultural, border-crossing perceptiveness—knowing how powerful others think and, by drawing on our past record of successful engagements and manipulations of these others, knowing especially what whets their appetites.

From this perspective a view of Tibetan exorcism practices can be offered that runs counter to the older traditions of western scholarship concerning magical transactions. That scholarship has a long history. Scholars of the colonial era such as Waddell, who described many of these rituals in great detail (Waddell 1895: 484–88, 498–99; Asboe 1936), saw them as vestigial, uncivilised forms of abhorrent practices such as human sacrifice. The *New York Times* declared in 1927 that these figures were "fashioned from barley dough" by Tibetan wizards as a form of "devil worship" to place curses on their enemies, along with "revolting ingredients" and "meaningless incantations" (*New York Times* 1927; see also Miller 1988: 9). For Cai Zhiming, a military officer in the troupe accompanying the 9th Panchen Lama in Qinghai in 1937 who described carefully in his diaries the different techniques used by lamas of each school, the question was not morality or origin but efficacy—the techniques did not appear to work and so appear as a kind of theatrical presentation for an audience:

> Then it is the turn of the Flower Hat Lamas, and so they make a human effigy from *tsampa* surrounded by other offerings, and a group of lamas will chant beside it. What they chant is about making an exchange of life, sending this effigy into hell to replace the real person. Sometimes they do it for a day and sometimes for several days. Sometimes the patient

> dies during the course of the ritual, and then the lama will say that the Hell-Lord had refused to accept the ransom. Since this is a negotiation with the Hell-Lord, the more offerings you have the more convincing you can be. So they just offer whatever good things they have (Cai 1937; translation by Chang Tianle).

Later, anthropologists came to frame their descriptions in Frazerian terms, implying surprise at the naïveté of belief in the efficacy of such procedures, or drawing on proto-structuralist notions such as that primitive people perceive a sympathetic connection or affinity between a person and an object or a place (see Cuevas 2009: 165–86). More recently, Lopez has offered a post-modernist critique of those positions, appealing to

> …the current generation of scholars, then, to challenge the [ethnocentric or colonial] characterization of Tibetan Buddhism … not by defensively concerning themselves exclusively with those texts and practices and persons who most easily fit into our conceptions of what is legitimately "philosophy" or "religion" (a fit achieved only through the most violent decontextualization), but by attempting to move beyond an ethnography in which "aversion seems to transform behavior and material substances into the objects of representation and interpretation" (1998: 236).[39]

In recent decades, a new generation of ethnographers has attempted to show the advantages of an approach that is "beyond aversion". Contemporary forms of ransom rituals have been described and discussed in considerable detail by Kvaerne (1985), Beyer (1978), Dollfus (1994), Lopez (1998), Karmay (1998a, b), Millard (2005), Balikci-Denjongpa (2006), and others, following in the wake of Nebesky-Wojkowitz ([1956] 1998), using terms that help us understand the workings of these processes without ascribing any superiority to the observer. Their observations, however, have all been limited to the post-1959 diaspora, describing ceremonies in Northern India or in America among Tibetan exiles, or in Himalayan cultures on the southern, eastern or western fringes of the Himalayas, and almost always in village communities rather than cities, implying an assumption that traditions persist only in rural areas where the effects of modernity are least present. There have been some important studies of large-scale collective rituals within contemporary Tibetan areas of China—in the far-eastern frontier areas of Qinghai/Amdo, those by Buffetrille (2004; 2008),

[39] The quotation is from Stephen Greenblatt, "Filthy Rites", *Daedalus* 111 (1982, no 3, 4).

Epstein and Peng (1998), Germano (1998), Dpal ldan bkra shis and Stuart (1998), Kalzang Norbu *et al.* (1999), and in the TAR that of Matthew Kapstein, who wrote about the 'Bri gung *'pho ba chen mo* (1998). But apart from Diemberger's study of women oracles (2005), so far there has been no study of domestic, small-scale practices in contemporary Tibet, and perhaps none among the urban population.

In the rest of this paper I offer some preliminary impressions of ransom rituals in contemporary Lhasa. My effort here is deliberately not to reproduce the traditions of village ethnography, with their implied perception of the rural as backward and preserved, or to emulate the practice whereby the observer assumes a right to intervene in private lives: it is to study the urban forms of household ritual, and only when these take public form. Primarily, I want to know what can be learnt from looking at the rituals when they move *out* of the household or the monastery and become a part of public, urban life, one in which I am also a participant, albeit foreign and temporary. In other words, I look at the phenomenon of placing human effigies made of dough in the busy streets of the modern city.[40]

II. CONTEMPORARY *GLUD*

Household ritual practices slowly re-emerged in public in Lhasa after the early 1980s. Under Mao and his immediate successors, from the mid-1950s to the end of the 1970s, the Party had pushed for a near-total elimination of religious practice in Tibet and elsewhere in China and had stigmatised religious or any other-worldly, non-materialist beliefs.[41] This approach was discarded in 1978 in favour of the policies known as "reform and opening up", and religious and cultural practices were gradually tolerated again. In this process of re-emergence, some changes appear to have taken place in the way Tibetan rituals are carried out. Many of these changes were in matters of minor detail, reflect-

[40] My comments here are based on some twenty months spent living in Lhasa between 2000 and 2007, on average about two to three months each year, mostly at Tibet University.

[41] The figures used most frequently to illustrate the situation are those provided by the 10th Panchen Lama in his internal 1962 petition to Zhou Enlai, in which he wrote, four years before the Cultural Revolution began: "Before democratic reform [1959], there were more than 2,500 large, medium and small monasteries in Tibet [the area now known as the TAR]. After democratic reform, only 70-odd monasteries were kept in

ing the availability of resources and of specialist knowledge; other more important differences are likely to become known only when further research is possible, such as the way in which even early research indicates that rituals are viewed simultaneously both cynically and with respect.

Concerning minor changes, it seems that both in Tibet and in the diaspora, for example, specialist herbs are no longer much used in the preparation of ransom figures, and that, instead of the multiple grains made into paste with the filings of rare or potent minerals described in the earliest texts, *rtsam pa* flour alone is often used to create the body of the effigy. Sometimes a cowry shell can still be seen as a substitute for the mouth or teeth, presumably because of its white colour, its shape, its enamel-like surface, its serrated teeth-like inner edge, and its availability, but in most other cases rare or precious objects are no longer used to represent the facial and bodily features of the effigy. Other minor changes reflect the circulation of commodities: nowadays, for example, toothpicks are an important part of effigy construction, used within the figure in place of the traditional *srog shing* or 'life stick' as the central stem to provide stability to the model and to help fix the head and limbs, and especially the hat, to the body.[42]

In other instances, the changes, although small, may indicate some larger shift in significance. For example, the symbols of value traditionally required for *glud* models appear to have been replaced by enhanced aesthetic labour: elaborate sculpting and painting of the central figure. The *rtsam pa* dough is often sculpted carefully to give the shape of folds in the clothes, a belt or sash, ears, the nose or other facial features, and then painted with some dye or colouring. Additional features such as the eyes, eyebrows, the mouth, jewellery and pendants are usually shaped from butter that has been dyed in various colours. Hair is sometimes painted on or made from strands of wool. The face is often painted white, sometimes with red edging for the ears as well as for the lips, and black for the eyes and the brows, as if artistic ability is coming to replace the use of rare commodities as a mark of value.

---

existence by the government. This was a reduction of more than 97%… In the whole of Tibet in the past there was a total of about 110,000 monks and nuns. Of those, possibly 10,000 fled abroad, leaving about 100,000. After democratic reform was concluded, the number of monks and nuns living in the monasteries was about 7,000 people, which is a reduction of 93%" (Barnett, 1998: 52).

[42] See Photoset 18 (July 25, 2007, Lhasa).

Fig. 13: Female effigy, palms facing forward, with threadcross, *ting lo*, rice offerings and *gtor ma*. Photograph: Robert Barnett, Lhasa 2005 (from Photoset 8).

The human figures in the modern *glud* array are often about 6–8 inches (15–20 cm) in height, not much larger than “the span of the thumb to the finger” described in Thu’u bkwan’s text. Alternatively, one could describe them as just about the height of a standard cardboard box, plus a little more, since that is what they will most frequently be placed in; a change in context and commodity might thus generate changes in production. They are usually of a single male, but single female figures are also seen,[43] and occasionally one sees an effigy of a monk, presumably because it is a monk who is the sick or dying patient and subject of the ransom effort.[44] Occasionally the human is mounted on a horse or an ox, also moulded out of *rtsam pa* dough.[45] In some cases, a couple is shown, sometimes with a house for each one,[46] and often with no house at all. Some tableaux feature an effigy of a wrathful spirit or demon rather than of a human, usually painted red or black,

[43] See Photoset 8 (June 26, 2005, Lhasa).
[44] See Photoset 19 (July 22, 2007, Lhasa).
[45] See Photoset 9 (July 4, 2005, Lhasa).
[46] See Photoset 15 (July 4, 2007, Lhasa).

and sometimes riding a horse or another mount; in larger tableaux, more often seen in monasteries, a group of up to five figures including both demons and humans can be seen.[47] As we know, some manuals, like the *Sher snying bdud zlog*, instruct the ritualist to call the demons to enter effigies of themselves before they are offered the ransom effigy and other substitutes (Lopez 1998: 18, 222; Balikci-Denjongpa 2006: 147–48),[48] so in those cases effigies of both kinds of beings are constructed. This kind of arrangement is also found in the *'chi glud* or 'death substitute' ceremony described by Nebesky-Wojkowitz ([1956] 1998: 511–14; cf. Kvaerne 1985), where one effigy is made resembling the patient who may be close to death and another is made of the *'chi bdag bdud* or Demon Master of Death, who is black, brandishes a snare and sword, and is mounted on a buffalo.[49] These permutations reflect the different decisions by ritual specialists as to which spirit is causing the patient's difficulties, and as to which ritual text should be used.

The human figures are usually standing, often with their hands raised up in front of them and the palms facing outwards with a flat, round coloured disc in the centre of the hand.[50] The figures are often dressed in traditional Tibetan robes with a belt across the middle and sometimes a sash around the shoulders as well.[51] The robes are usually fashioned out of *rtsam pa*, shaped like a sculptor would with clay and glazed with dye or colouring, with cuffs often a different colour from the sleeves, or the figure is wrapped in fabrics fastened to resemble traditional Tibetan robes. Ideally these would be silk, but in many cases a scrap of cloth wrapped loosely around the figure is used, probably because it has been taken from the clothes worn by the patient or sponsor, and so has their distinctive 'smell', the better to attract or deceive the demon. The human figures usually wear a hat shaped out of butter

---

47 See Photoset 10 (July 21, 2005, Southern Tibet).

48 Balikci-Denjongpa (2006: 147–49) has given a description of a *bdud mdos* ritual in Sikkim (performed by a Buddhist lama to replace a traditional Bon animal sacrifice) in the mid-1990s where the central *glud* or effigy was a representation of the troublesome local *bdud* spirit, not of the patient. In that ritual, the *bdud* spirit was successfully enticed to enter into the effigy and thus to take up residence in the *mdos* or threadcross palace (in this case made only of black thread) that had been built around the effigy.

49 See Photoset 16 (July 17, 2007, Lhasa).

50 See Photoset 1 (1998, Lhasa); Photoset 10 (July 21, 2005, Southern Tibet); Photoset 13 (March 10–12, 2006, Sichuan); Photoset 20 (August 29, 2008, Dharamsala, India).

51 See Photoset 2 (August 29, 2008, Dharamsala, India).

and then painted, which will often be in the shape of a traditional Tibetan flat hat,[52] or sometimes a 'cowboy' hat with upturned rim.[53] Attention may be paid to such details as the coloured hatband just above the rim. Unlike effigies of demons, humans are often not shown with their heads bare, perhaps because a hat or, for the women, head ornaments indicate wealth and social standing and so add to the impression of value.[54]

In the more elaborate constructions, the effigy has a house that has also been made out of cardboard and covered with coloured paper, which has often been cut to make elaborate shapes and designs. It may have windows painted on the front of the house, and a miniature Tibetan-style *sgo yu* or door hanging that has been decorated with one of the auspicious signs and fixed over the front entrance of the house. Around the central figure, or inside the house, will be the various ritual objects that represent substitutes for the patron's wealth or retinue, along with other offerings for the spirit—dough models of sheep or yak, a woodblock print of the male with the arrow on a *rgyang bu* alongside a print of a female with a spindle; the rows of miniature figures of people, birds and animals pressed from a *zan par* or wooden mould; the lighted butter in lamps made out of dough and called *ting lo*; the small offering cones and buttons of other kinds as described in the classic texts. Often there will be some *chang bu*, tubes of dough moulded with the imprint of the clenched hand of the patron or rubbed on the patron's body, sometimes one for each year of the patient's age. These will be much simpler than the main figures, without any elaborate shaping or colouring. Behind and above them there will almost always be the lozenge-shaped threadcross,[55] or sometimes three or more, with its bands of coloured wool. These items will all be more or less traditional in design, but the items of added value—the enticements and offerings in their own right that might once have been precious stones or foodstuffs—will have changed: there will be rice, Chinese sweets in their wrappers, dried noodles, sometimes small bottles of alcohol, and Chinese currency notes laid in front of or beside the dough figures.

[52] See, for example, the traditional round black hat with red central knot on a single male human in traditional robes in Photoset 5 (June 5, 2005, Lhasa).

[53] See Photoset 14 (July 3 (?), 2006, Lhasa).

[54] See Photoset 6 (June 9, 2005, Lhasa).

[55] See Photoset 7 (June 24, 2005, Lhasa).

Much of this is probably not exclusive to the modern, post-1980s form of this ritual: some of these features of the ritual might have been prominent in the 1950s, when these practices were last permitted inside Tibet. One change is clearly modern: these days the ransom figure, its house and retinue, are not so often placed on an iron tray or wooden board but in a cardboard box, which there is no attempt to decorate, though often the front has been carefully cut down to reveal the central figure as if it were on a stage. Usually it is a box marked with the trademark name of *Lasa pijiu*, or Lhasa Beer, one of the few commercially viable products of the modern city; sometimes it is a box for alcohol, mineral water, or shoes. We might fancy that the use of boxes that once held alcoholic products is deliberate, since angry spirits usually like alcohol and so it is often added to offerings, but probably people just use whatever box is most readily available. The sight of highly decorated and carefully sculpted effigies in unadorned beer boxes produces an incongruous effect for foreign observers, reminding them that a practice that is associated by them with the past sits comfortably in a modern, functional, unadorned commercial container.

Fig. 14: An effigy array, with three of the four continents seen around it, at a crossroads in Lhasa. Photograph: Robert Barnett, 2006 (Photoset 14).

1. Location

The public site chosen for disposal of the ransom figures has also undergone change, in part because the Tibetan community in Lhasa is now living in a city at least fifty-three times the size it was when the Chinese arrived some sixty years earlier.[56] The ransom ritual texts recited in the home or monastery are mostly concerned with persuading or compelling the spirit to take part in the trading transaction, but once this is done, an ordinary member of the household carries the box or board with the substitutes to a public place and leaves them there, so that the spirit will follow the ransoms and depart from the home or place it has haunted up till then. So the ransom ceremonies in the home or monastery conclude with the parade that takes the objects into public space.

Nowadays, that site will almost always be a crossroads in the city, the busier the better, although, as we shall see, any kind of junction can be used. It is rare to see this parade, not just because some texts, such as the *'chi glud*, require this disposal to be done at dusk, but because in modern Lhasa the carrying of the ransom is likely to be furtive and hurried. This may be because of the risk of infection by the spirit, but taking a household practice into public space now has another, less otherworldly danger, the risk of political or social disapproval. The one time I saw it being done the bearer was a woman, another breach with tradition. She walked with the crowd as it crossed the road and then left the effigy box in the centre of the street so quickly that I was unsure if I had really seen her do it. The modern bearer has more reasons to avoid any careless glance towards the home or backwards towards the effigy than just traditional concerns about attracting the attention of a spirit.

A cluster of beliefs surrounds the public practice of depositing the effigy at the crossroads. Many Tibetans now say that even being near the substitutes or touching them while they are inhabited by a demon might allow the spirit to transfer its attentions and presence to them. Some exiles hold that if a passer-by sees a ransom figure, he or she should spit three times in its direction and then not look at it again, though I have never witnessed that.[57] I was told by some monks and

---

[56] In 2009 the authorities announced that the urban area of Lhasa will be "constrained" to 75 sq km. See Hu Yinan, "Lhasa to boast modern redesign", *China Daily*, March 17th, 2009.

[57] Tenzing Rigdol, an exile Tibetan artist brought up in Nepal, told me—speaking mainly of the *nyi shu dgu glud gtor*, the annual practice carried out by families (without the help of specialists) in the final days of each year to rid the household of 'the

specialists that these kinds of fear of contagion are incorrect, and that the ransom figures pose no risk to others outside the household, and indeed I later saw a monk handling effigies directly after a ceremony. This might have been because the monks I consulted had a modernist scepticism about the effectiveness of the ceremony even though they practiced it, but either way, the figures deposited at crossroads attract no visible attention from any local people. Tibetan drivers and cyclists usually avoid the boxes in the street and drive round them, showing no sign of even noticing them. The objects in their boxes are seemingly ignored, probably to avoid attracting the interest of the spirit now inhabiting them, or perhaps because their standing within Chinese official modernity remains problematic and so they are best left unremarked.

Within an hour or two, if the effigies have not already been crushed by a vehicle, the decoration on the figures melts in the sun, the colouring runs, and the plain dough underneath is revealed. If the location is not a busy road, the figures will in due course be eaten by animals, since almost all of them are edible; this would have been the usual outcome in the days when there was less motor traffic in the Lhasa streets and still is in villages and quieter places. In one instance, the offerings were set on fire more or less immediately by the person who deposited it, as is sometimes required by the text.[58] This is easier to do now than it would have been in earlier conditions, because the substitutes are often within a cardboard box and so are easy to ignite. Either way, whether burnt or not, in the modern city by the end of the day the remains of the figures and their retinues will be barely discernible apart from the imprint of tyre tread marks on crushed dough on the tarmac. Probably only the flattened cardboard of the container and the woollen strands of the threadcross will still be visible.

---

four hundred twenty-four kinds of sickness and the eighty thousand kinds of obstacles'—that after the bearer or 'postman' has taken the effigy to a crossroads, "one must not look back at the *glud gtor* once he/she places it there and must not talk to anyone on his way back home. Generally it is the male who takes the *glud*, not a female (probably it is considered very dangerous and risky). Upon arrival [back at the home], the postman must knock the door few times to signal his return. And in return he receives a few questions, which he must answer correctly. The questions are, "who are you and from where did you come?" He must state his name and then answer the questioner that he had come from the spirit-based realm and has gone out to dispel the family's negativities. Then the door opens and a patch of *rtsam pa* is smeared on his right shoulder marking the auspicious completion of the whole ritual" (personal communication, October 2007).

[58] See Photoset 11 (July 24, 2005, Lhasa).

2. *Researching Urban Rituals*

An outsider hoping to learn more about popular religious rituals in Lhasa today faces significant ethical and practical difficulties. If one were to conduct interviews, local people would be placed at risk unless specific permission had been granted, since unauthorised research by foreigners is illegal. In addition, superstition, known as *mixin* in Chinese or *rmong dad* in Tibetan, is carefully distinguished in official Chinese writings from religion (*zongjiao*) and in general is vilified by the state as an unhealthy social practice. In some cases—when it is used to acquire wealth or sexual favours, or when it is deemed to be connected to an organised group which is perceived as being in opposition to the state—superstitious practices can be prosecuted as criminal offences and in the most serious extreme instances can lead to capital punishment. A Tibetan movement in Nag chu known as 'the Heroes of Ling' was 'eliminated' in 1981,[59] at least three Chinese people were executed for leading 'counter-revolutionary' superstitious organisations between 1984 and 1989,[60] and thousands of adherents of the Falungong movement have been arrested since their movement was declared "an evil cult" in 1999, many of whom are reported to have died in custody. These movements were defined as other than religions (they were identified as "cults", "evil faiths", "feudal superstitious organisations", or "counter-revolutionary organisations") and were therefore considered suitable for suppression.

Definitions of superstition are provided in frequent publications and statements issued by the Propaganda Bureau of the CCP, the Religious Affairs Bureau or other bodies, particularly during periodic campaigns to teach atheism, the scientific outlook, the Marxist view of religion, materialist worldview, the adaptation of religion to socialism, or similar points of view, sometimes referred in public English-language documents to as "actively guiding religion to gear to the needs of modern-

[59] The official account of the Heroes of Ling movement, titled "Speech on the illegal setting up and subsequent elimination in May 1981 of an organisation in Amdo County perpetuating feudal superstition", says that the movement was eliminated and that the leading members were arrested, but does not say whether they suffered any other punishment. See Anon 1982.

[60] Leaders of the Huang Ji Dao (Way of the Imperial Ultimate) in 1984, the Yi Guan Dao (Way of Single Truth) in 1985, and the Zhong Fang Dao (Way of the Middle Zone) in 1989 were all executed (Hilary 1992: 35).

ization and social progress" (State Council Information Office 2001: Part III). An internal party booklet called *A Reader for Advocating Science and Technology and Doing Away with Superstitions* distributed in Tibet in 2002 during the campaign against the Falungong movement defined superstition as "blind beliefs and the worship of certain people or objects", and "believing in supernatural and super material mysterious things, believing that such things exist in other worlds and control all the things in this world and human life and hoping to rely on them to avoid disasters and attain happiness" (Propaganda Bureau 2002, Question 36; Saunders 2004: 96). The *Reader* lists ten forms of superstition, of which *qu bing gan gui* ("getting rid of illness by expelling ghosts") is the eighth. As in all such statements, the distinction between superstition and religion is fluid and vague, chiefly resting on the argument that religions are both old and have theoretical writings, institutions and regulations:

> The difference between religion and superstition is very obvious. In its long process of development, religion has formed a series of special religious beliefs, religious emotions, and corresponding religious theory, religious regulations and complete religious ceremonies, organizations and institutions. Religion has had an important influence on the inheritance and development of human culture and has accumulated a certain degree of cultural achievement and inherited civilization. The several contemporary major religions in our country all do good works, love the country, support the policy of the Party and government and share the common fate with the state and nation. They are quite different from superstition. Everything done by the people who advocate superstition and undertake superstitious activities is nothing more than using *zhuang shen nong gui* (pretend to be spirits and control ghosts) to cheat people as a means of making a living. The organizations that undertake superstitious activities are more harmful to public security and destroy social stability. The extensive illegal activities they undertake severely harm the masses' basic interest (Propaganda Bureau 2002, Question 41; Saunders 2004: 98).

The booklet, written and distributed internally by the Party to train its activists and therefore more outspoken than a public document, refers to recent "manifestations of a new superstition of ghosts and spirits" and notes that "in recent years, some people have been making images of gods, practicing divination, and praying to the spirits for rain and medicine to deceive the community and people under the pretext of expanding national traditional culture" (Saunders 2004: 98). The term 'national' here refers to 'nationality' or 'ethnicity' and indicates that

attempts had been made in China to justify such practices by describing them as part of the traditional customs of a nationality, since these are permitted in China if they are not considered harmful. In fact, they are often encouraged: both the Chinese state and its media demonstrate a passion for certain customs of non-Chinese (non-'Han') nationalities. But this cultivation of local customs applies primarily to traditions that are not belief-based, such as popular song and dance; belief-based practices are more likely to be viewed by officials with the kind of deep suspicion described in the *Reader*.

Chinese officials at present seem unlikely to attack domestic or private rituals, even those that are quite clearly superstitious according to their definitions, unless they are deemed by higher officials to be schemes to make money or activities of a hostile organisation. Nevertheless, atheism is widely taught and is part of school education and mass propaganda,[61] so that everyone knows that superstition is looked down upon and publicly decried. In particular, the state expects the educated élites in nationality areas to set a healthy example of scientific, materialist culture and correct understanding to those who are less educated or less privileged. This is especially true of the people with whom foreign researchers are most in contact, because many of them, including scholars, are government employees. Much stricter policies apply to these people, part of the new and wealthy middle class that was expanded in the mid-1990s when Beijing inflated salaries in Tibet, apparently in the hope of buying support among the new,

[61] See for example, "Why does little Tseren not pray to the gods and Buddhas any longer?", Question No. 116 in *A Reader for Advocating Science and Technology and Doing Away with Superstitions* (Propaganda 2002; translated in Saunders 2004: 102), which explains why school children should not practice religion or at least certain forms of it: "Little Tseren read through the [school]books and understood that there are no gods and spirits in the world, and that success only comes from hard work. … Old mother Yangzong wanted to go to the monastery with her grandson to pray to the Buddhas again and said that the reason that they had not had good results in the exam the previous year was because he had not gone to the monastery enough. Little Tseren knew that his grandmother was on his side but he already knew that doing so was ridiculous and useless. So then little Tseren politely said, "Grandmother, our country implements the policy of religious freedom. I respect that you believe in religion, but it is my freedom not to believe in it and you should respect my choice." After convincing his grandmother, little Tseren studied hard wholeheartedly and eventually he entered his long-wished for Lhasa middle school with excellent marks." For a similar example, see Pei Fulin's *A Short Sketch*, a short drama (*xiaoping*) shown on Tibet television, which shows the futility of giving money to a religious shrine instead of to a school. I have also seen a television sketch mocking a fake medicine man or lama who pretends to be able to cure a patient.

enlarged local élite. As a result of decisions made at a meeting in Beijing called the Third National Forum on Work in Tibet in 1994, all Tibetans who work for the government are required by Chinese officials not to carry out or show any belief in religious practices, still less superstitious ones (Barnett 1996, 2003). This does not apply in other parts of China, where such regulations apply only to members of the Communist Party and not to government employees in general.

In fact nobody knows what the state or its agents would do if forced to pay attention to private household rituals among Tibetans. As far as is known, there has so far been no comment from any state organs about the re-emergence on city streets of the ransom effigies. Like much of the regulatory environment in Tibet, that official silence is uneasy and unstable because it is only loosely defined by law or policy and could change at any point. And every few days one sees ever more elaborately constructed effigies placed at the centre of crossroads in the Tibetan areas of Lhasa.

A foreign observer in Tibet has few ways of learning about these practices other than observing their appearance in the street (the only legal option, obtaining official approval for a joint research project on such a topic, is extremely difficult). There is no responsible way to find out who is leaving these tableaux in the streets, what illness has necessitated them being made, or who are the ritual specialists recommending and constructing them.[62] To explore this aggressively would be invasive, not just because the families would probably be experiencing distress or serious illness among their members, but also because the attitude of the state towards these specific practices is most likely to be negative. The lack of opportunity for conventional ethnography is not a handicap, however. Instead, it invites another kind of study: the exploration through observation of the social meanings of the re-appearance of effigies in the public spaces of the city, and the messages this communicates about contemporary Tibetan cultural life and thought.

[62] I did make a formal application several times from 2003–2007 to the Tibet Academy of Social Sciences for a joint research project on this and other topics, but unsurprisingly this was not successful. No reasons were given. Possibly some officials would see the evidence of continuing domestic ritual practices as a sign of official failure or as cultural backwardness. But any research into contemporary urban life seems sensitive, since no leadership has been demonstrated on this subject from the centre. Even a much less sensitive proposal concerning a study of cinema in contemporary Tibet was declared to be too sensitive for consideration, though this seemed to be partly because no one had ever suggested it before.

A foreigner approaching or photographing these figures in the street causes some anxiety among Tibetan passers-by, including small children, who will often try to warn the foreigner not to go near the figures and not to touch them because of the danger of being harmed. This suggests the prevalence of belief among local people that the resident spirits in the effigies are sources of potential damage. Other passers-by become concerned about foreigners who try to photograph the effigies *in situ* not because of infection by the spirit,[63] but because one of the disadvantages of a normal digital camera is that one has to get very close to the image. So, in today's conditions, where effigies are placed at busy crossroads, this means lying in the middle of the street with traffic hurtling past on either side, which for practical reasons understandably worries the local Tibetan police.

The principal story that is told by the public emergence of the effigies is historical: when we see them, we are watching the unfolding of a history of popular thought and belief among the Tibetan population of Lhasa. A Tibetan from Lhasa whom I asked about the *glud* practices when he was outside his country began by telling me of his own discovery of ritual. The speaker, whom I will call T, is an educated Tibetan in his late 30s. For him, that discovery was part of a larger narrative about the re-emergence of unofficial, community knowledge:

> Once, when we were boys, we cut down a tree branch in the Klu khang [the park behind the Potala known as the Klu or Nāga Palace]. Shortly after, one boy's leg suddenly swelled up. So we went to a lama, and he said we had offended the *klu* [*nāga*]. We had to go and apologize to them, speaking to them as if they were people, and we had to make offerings of *gtor ma* and butter lamps. It was when I was a kid that we did that. It was about 1979. It was not allowed to do ritual things like the *glud* then. So it was always done in a hidden way, or in the middle of the night. And afterwards they threw it away (Interview with T, October 19, 2007).

In T's account the ransom practices are specialist versions of the popular practice of making appeasement offerings to such local spirits as the *klu*, and part of gradual re-emergence of popular knowledge about religion after the 1970s. From this account it is clear that even in the Tibetan capital, the centre of China's efforts at modernisation both under socialism and now, the practices of popular religion among

[63] Christopher Bell was told by a family member depositing a *glud gtor* in Lhasa that photographing an effigy destroyed the effectiveness of the ritual, but this may have been an attempt to deter him from taking photographs (personal communication, September 10, 2007).

Tibetans never completely disappeared after the Chinese take-over in Tibet, or at least had re-emerged as secret practices by the early 1970s when T was a child. The transmission of traditional knowledge concerning ritual beliefs thus survived efforts by the Chinese state to banish that form of thinking between 1959 and 1979. This implies that ideological re-education in the Maoist era in Tibet had limited effect, whatever the outward appearances at the time, and that public compliance must have been feigned to some extent in some or many cases. Whatever people's views were of political or social change, by the early 1970s some at least did not share the state's views about religious belief. It is also clear that enough elderly people and former monks or ritual specialists remained alive in the early 1980s to hand back that knowledge to a younger generation, in spite of efforts by the state then to discourage superstition and encourage atheism.[64] It is also clear that the contours of these beliefs did not follow the distinction between the educated and the uneducated, or the urban and the rural, that is so often assumed by modernists: the continuity or re-emergence of beliefs seems no less prevalent among intellectuals, officials and modern businessmen than among the illiterate and rural majority.

T's story suggests that knowledge of spirit-induced illnesses and their cure was largely unknown to the younger generation in any explicit form until about 1979, but that older people were then able to pass it on secretly or, later, openly. Indeed, although at the time T did not know about the links between spirits and illnesses, he recalls that even during the Cultural Revolution (officially dated 1966-76, though it probably lasted some three years longer in Tibet) some ritual practices continued secretly in his home:

> Even in the Cultural Revolution. I think my family did rituals very secretly. My great-grandmother was there, she lived to a very old age, and she didn't care even in the Cultural Revolution. We had some relatives who used to be monks, and then we could call them, and one would come to our home and secretly make them for us. But you couldn't do all those ritual things, because if you used the bells and the *rdo rje*, everybody would know. But you could do reciting quietly, that's how I know those prayers.

---

[64] Katia Buffetrille notes "When I did my first pilgrimage to A myes rma chen in 1990, all the pilgrims knew what to do and where to do it, like carrying stones on their back, something not written traditionally in the *gnas yig*. Older people had told them what to do" (Personal communication, January 9, 2009).

This account matches the recollections of the literary scholar Pema Bhum, who wrote in his memoirs, published abroad, about a local man who continued to recite the Gesar epic secretly at his home during the Cultural Revolution (Bhum 2001: 119–22). But T's situation was quite different from Bhum's, who lived at that time with his family in a village in Amdo in the north-east of the Tibetan plateau, part of Qinghai province. T's father was a minor official in a very major government office in Lhasa, so the family lived in an important work unit or government compound in the heart of the city, where they would have had only a city apartment rather than a village house. Nevertheless, a certain amount of traditional knowledge seems to have circulated within the extended family living in their home even if it was rarely or never articulated openly.

Another Tibetan of the same age told me that as a child she remembered her father making her avoid certain trees or places in the Bar skor, the central pilgrimage and market street in Lhasa. She only later understood that these places were associated with *klu* (*nāga*s). Her father was highly educated and had belonged to a former minor aristocrat-official family, and so had been held for some 20 years in prison elsewhere in Tibet—mainly in Spo bo bkra mo and in Nying khri (Ch. Linzhi)—but had been released in the late 1970s after years of political re-education. Despite his fluency in modern concepts and in Marxism, he had retained his cultural beliefs and local knowledge about the spiritual geography of Lhasa, although at the time he could not then safely convey the reasons to her.

This evidence of hidden resistance within the home to Chinese ideology and to atheism in the 1970s, at least from the oldest people, former monk-relatives and released prisoners, raises questions about theories which attribute the very rapid and widespread revival of Tibetan religious culture in the 1980s to revitalisation, a term created by structural anthropologists in the 1950s to describe conscious efforts at the reconstruction or invention of cultural practices (Wallace 1956; Havnevik 1994: 262), or to the theories which see that process in Tibet as due primarily to the influence of returning or visiting exiles from India and Nepal in the early 1980s. Instead, these accounts suggest the importance of looking at the continuity provided by hidden cultural practices within Tibetan households during the Maoist era, not unlike crypto-Judaism in Spain and Portugal during the early stages of the

Fig. 15: Monks adding detail to a *ting lo* in an array around a finished figure that is unadorned and unpainted. The demon figure with protuberant breasts carrying a spindle and mounted on an ox or yak can be seen behind the mixing bowl. Photograph: Chris Hatchell, Kham 2006 (from Photoset 13).

Inquisition. Although the meanings and underlying frameworks of interpretation within which religion is understood and practiced may have changed radically among Tibetans, as elsewhere in the world, what we are witnessing in Tibet is not at all like an innovative or cultic practice, still less a regressive, escapist immersion in some past or imported belief system (as in the concept of revitalisation), but a recovery or restitutive process, a maturation of a consistent intellectual tradition, marked primarily by continuity, despite the persecutions and suppression of the intervening two decades.[65]

T's account is important for another reason: he shows how the re-emergence of the *glud* practice in Lhasa is an historical index of the

[65] Ronald Schwartz notes how ritual practices can return "because people simply remember the bodily practices through which they are performed", a process described in Connerton 1989 and particularly relevant to the re-emergence of ritual actions such as clapping and the construction of effigies and arrays (Ronald Schwartz, personal communication, February 2, 2009). Katia Buffetrille notes that among pilgrims she observed at A myes rma chen "some nomads had a paper written by a friend telling what to do [and] in which place" (personal communication, April 4, 2009).

economic as well as the political conditions among the Tibetan populace. In 1979 and just after, when Tibetans again began to speak explicitly about ransom and exorcism practices openly within their families, they still kept the public part of the practices hidden. The figures were made, but they were taken outside into public space only in the middle of the night, or were hidden amongst the household rubbish. In addition, they were not adorned:

> The first time I saw one in the street was maybe 1982 or 1983, that's the first time I saw them. The Government then had allowed religious practice again. They never said anything about the *glud* specifically, though they know that it's to help with people's illness. You would only see it in the Bar skor area, but in the government area of Lhasa, [there were] very few. Every morning when we would go to school we might see them.
>
> But they were very simple, not like these ones now. I never saw the colourful ones. They were without colour. Then, if you wanted to use colour, you had to paint it on paper. Even if you wanted to, you couldn't get coloured paper, you didn't have the objects to make them, or the people you could invite to do it, or the money to pay them. These days people are wealthy. From the *glud* you can see the level of people's living conditions.

From T's comments and other observations, one can reconstruct a rough chronology of the *glud*'s return to the Lhasa streets. During the Cultural Revolution, small effigies of dough and hand-pressed rolls of *chang bu* were probably made secretly and then dropped at night in the streets, most likely hidden among rubbish. From about 1979, the practice of making effigies seems to have resumed within homes, because people sensed that the bans on religious practice might no longer be enforced, and so former monks were again invited discreetly to carry out household functions. But their effigies would have been plain dough, without colouring, and probably were still placed inconspicuously among rubbish. By 1982, two years after the reformist leader Hu Yaobang had visited Lhasa and explicitly re-authorised Tibetan cultural practices, it seems that effigies were beginning to appear openly in the alleyways and streets of the Tibetan quarter, but were still without any colouring. Traffic was light then and they would have been eaten by dogs which were numerous in the city until the culls of strays in the 1990s. The first report I have of a multi-coloured *glud* in Lhasa is 1992,[66] but they seem to have still been relatively rare. From the time I

[66] My thanks to Antonio Terrone for this information. See Photosets 1–4 for pictures from 1996 and 1998.

began a series of annual visits to the city eight years later, they were becoming increasingly frequent and their ornamentation steadily more lavish. As T noted, the degree of ornamentation is an index of people's wealth and of the availability of commodities for the construction effort. It was a result of the same policy of increasing middle class wealth and developing a market economy that was meant to win over educated Tibetans in the government sector towards support of the modern, secularist state and to lead to superior 'spiritual civilisation', the abandonment of non-materialist beliefs.

Similarly, we can chart the return of the *glud* from private homes back to the public spaces of the city. After the 1970s, the sites of *glud* disposal moved in stages from the hidden to the obvious: from rubbish heaps besides houses, to traffic-free alleyways in the Tibetan quarter, to side roads near the Bar skor, and, by the end of the 1990s, to the major thoroughfares and crossroads of the city, including junctions that are now so busy that it must be physically dangerous to place the offerings at their centre. The danger is even more acute for those rituals which require the disposal to be done in the middle of the day, when traffic is at its height, let alone those which require four mountain ranges or continents made out of *rtsam pa* to be arrayed in separate boxes or placed directly on the ground to form a square around the image placed at the centre of a crossroads.[67]

Just as the decoration and siting of the ransom effigies has made them increasingly prominent in public life, so has the method of their destruction changed. As we saw, people place the substitutes at sites where the spirit will be unable to retrace its steps when the ransom objects are no longer desirable. Under conditions of modernity, an acceleration of this process has taken place, much as Walter Benjamin described with works of art, but literally so. People now expect the substitutes to be destroyed quickly after they have been placed at the disposal site, which incidentally reduces the risk of the return or transfer of the harm, and makes the confusing of the spirit more likely. The disposal process thus has its own history. It would have been done earlier by the weather or by an animal coming across the objects by chance. In some cases the effigies would have been set on fire to expedite the process. But increasingly, as cars have become a major feature of life in Lhasa, the motor vehicle is expected to carry out the destruction by

[67] See Photoset 2 (May 1996, Lhasa); Photoset 14 (July 2006, Lhasa); Photoset 20 (August 2008, Dharamsala).

driving over the images and disturbing the spirit, which, confused by finding itself at a junction, is unable to return to the person or place it had troubled previously. In the urban *glud gtor* practice, the motorcar has become the final player in the ritual.

But this is not an innocent or colour-blind story in which cars are inanimate or characterless agents: they are marked ethnically. Tibetan drivers are unlikely, given the choice, to drive over the boxes or the figures, because of fears of contagion once the spirit is separated from the desirable objects that it has been absorbed in. Therefore the vehicles that perform the destructive function are driven by Chinese or other non-Tibetans. This at least is a widespread perception among Tibetans, one that seems to be enjoyed mischievously. As a Tibetan teacher once said to me, "Driving over the *glud gtor* is the one good thing the Chinese do." It was in part a joke, since in terms of the effectiveness of the exorcism it does not really matter who drives the cars, which crush the effigies, as long as it is done. But the point is clear: the placing of the *glud gtor* in public space divides the initiated from the ignorant, and forces the ignorant to do what the subaltern desires to have done but would not want to do himself. Symbolically, momentarily, the political hierarchy is reversed.

3. Seeing and Denying

Placing something unknown and disallowed in the street creates a crisis of representation: the fact that effigies became publicly visible again in the 1990s does not mean that they were seen. As far as I can tell, the effigies in the cardboard boxes remained largely imperceptible to outsiders. Visibility is a function of meaning: unless the objects were understood within a meaningful context, they were probably thought of by those unaware of Tibetan cultural conventions as some kind of aberration, a child's game perhaps, rubbish left in the middle of the street, or something that did not need explaining. After all, we know that for quite different reasons locals did not look at them when they passed them in the street, and so would have given no indication to outsiders that these models had significant function or purpose—a telling example, like Younghusband's interpretation of Tibetans clapping, as to how uninformed observers can be easily misled as to the significance of cultural practices. Foreign researchers seem to have first photographed

them in the mid-1990s. Local officials would certainly have passed them in the street and, physically, seen them. Higher-level officials would have passed by in limousines with darkened windows and may not have noticed them as their cars drove over them; lower ranking officials perhaps chose not to see them, not knowing how to respond if they did, since they had not apparently received any instructions from the centre as to how to handle them—an example of willed denial by minor officials, a reluctance to initiate, that is an important feature of politics in contemporary China, and a major factor in the wide variation of official responses to borderline or unscripted social practices.

In certain cases, not looking at the boxes is in itself meaningful. Two types of person in contemporary Lhasa have jobs which require them to deal with objects deposited in streets: traffic police and street cleaners. As of 2006 the members of these two professions were Tibetans. Many street cleaners work early in the morning just after dawn, by which time any effigies have usually long been crushed or eaten, but some work in the day or early evening, and they certainly see effigies, and normally would have to remove them, since their job is to sweep up everything in the street. I only once saw one of them remove a box with an effigy

Fig. 16: Chinese and Tibetans shoppers and pedestrians walking past a *glud gtor* as they cross the street. Photograph: Robert Barnett, Lhasa 2005 (from Photoset 8).

from the centre of the street and shift it to the gutter at the roadside, and then only with the full length of the broom between the sweeper and the box, and without damaging the contents of the box. As for policemen, although they were often on points duty not far from the boxes and sometimes stopped me going near one (presumably because of the danger from traffic), I never saw them move one, even those deposited at the centre of the tri-junction in front of the new thirteen-storey tower block of Sera Lam and the Northern Gling skor that is the Lhasa Municipal Police Headquarters. As of 2007, it seems that in most cases the boxes, still less the effigies, are rarely touched or moved by any Tibetans, even if it is their job to do so.

There were other kinds of denial or oversights. At that time, it was difficult to find monks in the major monasteries of Lhasa who admitted to knowing anything about making the images. At the Jo khang, I was told that no monk there had any knowledge of such practices, and was advised to go to a side chapel of the Rme ru rnying pa temple. But there, although the monks had detailed knowledge of *klu gtor*, which they were happy to share, they said that they had no knowledge about the *glud gtor*. Some assured me that it was only Rnying ma monks or wandering *sngags pas* (lay tantric practitioners) who would know about such practices. Perhaps the monks I met, who were aged around 30, belonged to a generation that had lost or not yet acquired such knowledge, or perhaps their teachers frowned on such practices, or the high political profile of their institution as a national monument made it unwise for them to deal with what the state (and sometimes the Buddhist establishment) saw as borderline forms of religion. At Sera monastery, a major *Dge lugs* centre, I was taken to meet an elderly and very learned monk who gave a detailed explanation about the astrological calculations required (based on variables such as the birth-sign and gender of the patient) in order to identify the direction in which the offerings should be carried when they are taken from the patron's home to the disposal site. Despite his academic expertise, he did not tell me how to find ritual experts who admitted to carrying out the practice or constructing the effigies.[68] But I later realised that members of all the

[68] Christopher Bell talked to a layperson who had commissioned a lama from the Potala to carry out a ransom ritual, for which he had paid fifty yuan (c. $8) for the ceremony and construction, and twenty yuan for carrying the *glud gtor* to its final location (personal communication, September 10, 2007).

Tibetan Buddhist schools do these practices, to different degrees, often according to the views of individual teachers.

4. An Eastern Tibetan Ransom Ritual

The situation was very different in Amdo, the north-eastern Tibetan area mostly subsumed within Qinghai province, where since the reforms of the early 1980s, cultural and even political conditions for Tibetans have been more relaxed than in Lhasa or the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). Tibetan areas within Qinghai have been allowed to provide middle school education in Tibetan medium, something that, although promised by the local congress in 1987, was never allowed to take place in the TAR apart from four trial classes that were disbanded without public explanation in 1995. Even though many protests took place in Qinghai as part of the major wave of unrest that swept the Tibetan plateau in March 2008, few involved violence.[69] Whatever the reasons, it was much easier there to find monks in Amdo who carry out *glud* practices, including those from the *Dge lugs* school. In July 2007, I and the sociologist Ronald Schwartz, who had studied dialectics in a *Dge lugs* monastery in India some years earlier, travelled to the monastery of Sku 'bum, (Ch. Ta'ersi) near Xining, the capital of Qinghai, and asked a local friend, visiting home from studying in the US, to arrange for us to sponsor a specialist monk-ritualist to perform the ceremony on our behalf.

We were taken at about 10am one morning to a house situated in a small compound of its own on the edge of the monastery grounds. The owner of the house, Blo bzang tshul 'khrims, a holder of the *dge bshes* degree in monastic studies, was a specialist in divinations and exorcism rituals. He had already gathered around him five other monks, who were clearly expert at the particular tasks that were needed for the ceremony. Someone had been out shopping the previous day, probably a lay attendant or family member, and all the necessary provisions and materials had been bought in advance. The monks had already been working for about half an hour before we arrived and continued making the preparations for the ceremony for much of the day.

69 Preliminary reports indicate that between 10 and 20% of the protests in other areas escalated into violence, mainly burning government offices or police stations.

The most important of the preparatory activities had been carried out by the ritual master some days earlier, probably immediately he received the phone call from our local friend asking him to carry out the ceremony on our behalf. That preparation had been the *mo* or divination procedure (sometimes called *sho mo*) which had told the ritualist which spirit was the source of our obstacles. He did not say which form of divination he had used, but probably he had done it—perhaps even while still on the phone—by arranging the beads on his rosary in a particular way, blowing on them, shuffling them, and then interpreting the result. The answer that he had received was that our difficulties (which we had not specified) were to do with the spirit of the type known as *rgyal po* or "the King", specifically *Dkor bdag rgyal po*, "the King (or King group of spirits) who is the Owner of Wealth".[70] He had then selected one of a group of texts known in brief as *rgyal mdos* ("the *mdos* or threadcross ceremony dedicated to spirits of the *rgyal po* or king class"),[71] to provide the instructions for paying a ransom to the spirit on our behalf, and the other monks had been summoned to prepare the objects needed for the ritual described in that text.

The offering to Dkor bdag, we were told, is considered beneficial for people who suffer from depression, for those affected by bad luck, and for wealthy people who have lost money. It is not helpful, apparently, for those who want to make money. As in most cases involving Buddhist monks, the ransom ritual would not be performed on its own but in concert with a ritual of invocation and offering to a wrathful Buddhist deity, in this case Yamāntaka (also called Vajrabhairava in Sanskrit and Gshin rje gshed in Tibetan). The monks explained that since normal people do not have power to overcome negative forces by themselves, it is necessary to enlist the power of a Buddha to do this. They had chosen Yamāntaka rather than Hayagrīva (Rta mgrin) or Guhyasamāja (Gsang 'dus), also protector deities particular to the *Dge*

[70] A ransom ritual to the same spirit is described by Balikci-Denjongpa (2006: 145) in her account of the mid-1990s rituals she observed in Sikkim. Nebesky-Wojkowitz ([1956] 1998: 448) connects this demon or group of demons with Pehar, who had been titled the *dkor bdag* or 'treasure-master' or custodian of the monastery's valuables when he resided at Bsam yas, before moving to perform the same function at Gnas chung. Pehar is defined as leader of the *rgyal po* demons (Nebesky-Wojkowitz [1956] 1998: 377).

[71] Descriptions of two other *rgyal mdos* ceremonies are given in Nebesky-Wojkowitz ([1956] 1998: 377–82).

Fig. 17: The woodblock print of Dkor bdag rgyal po just before it is glued to the inside wall of the spirit-palace that has been built for him. Photograph: Robert Barnett, Sku 'bum 2007.

lugs school, because it had a special relationship to the ritual master's own practice.

One older monk was working on preparing the special *gtor ma* or conical offering cakes that would make up the shrine for Yamāntaka. He had created a reddish dye with which to colour the main *gtor ma*, since these were to be offered to a wrathful deity. He had a paper plate with butter on it, a wooden spatula and a large bowl of water in which to dip and shape the butter, which he turned into button-shaped insignia or *dkar rgyan*, 'white ornaments' that were placed on the front of some of the *gtor ma*. Other slabs of butter were turned into elaborate sun and moon symbols, cloud-like wisps, or exquisitely fashioned flowers placed on the main offering cake, which was not conical but bulbous or 'roundish' in shape, representing a heart; these would represent the offerings of all five senses, and the six wisdoms. These were finally put on a shrine that had been made up in an adjoining room, below a covered *thang ka* or scroll painting of Yamāntaka, alongside offerings of fruit, bowls of water and rice, prayer books and a vase of flowers. Next

Fig. 18: The spirit-palace of Dkor bdag nearing completion, with the pan of glue beside it. Photograph: Robert Barnett, Sku 'bum 2007.

to the shrine was a half-concealed photograph of the Dalai Lama and an aquarium for tropical fish. None of the preparations were done in that shrine room, nor was the ransom ever taken in there.

The older monk had also created a larger *gtor ma*, painted red and shaped as a tetrahedron with sharp edges. It was ornamented with two butter-buttons and a curlicue representing clouds of smoke and flames (Nebesky-Wojkowitz [1956] 1998: 348). It would not be placed on the shrine, but would accompany the ransom offerings to represent the wrath of Yamāntaka if the ransoms were not accepted. The monk also created long strips of bas-relief figures by pressing *rtsam pa* dough onto the sides of a *zan par* or wooden mould-stick, producing half-formed shapes of miniature animals, birds, attendants and other figures. He also shaped two figures out of dough, about three inches (7–8 cm) high, with features pinched out of them that were deliberately vague to represent their faces and their arms. These we learnt later were the *pho gdong* and *mo gdong*—the substitutes for the male and female elements required for every ransom. The bodies of these two figures were

wrapped in red and white cloth and their heads covered with small sacks of red cloth just before they were placed on a tray behind the central figure. In this case they had been shaped roughly out of dough rather than printed from paper and pasted onto *rgyang bu* or wooden slats, as is more usual, though later we saw the same monk cut such printed images from rolls of paper covered with prints of animals, monkeys, flaming swords and other symbols. These were later pasted on the inner walls of the spirit-palace.

A younger monk was constructing this building. It was a windowless house with a steeply sloping roof that he fashioned from the remnants of a cardboard box originally used to transport *Wuliang chun*, a popular Chinese alcohol distilled from sorghum and rice, perhaps used as offerings to wrathful deities in ceremonies at the monastery. He cut up the sides of the box, refolded them and then glued them together before covering each wall with coloured paper. He then fixed cut-out designs that had been made from other sheets of coloured paper to each wall, and made curved gables from the coloured paper that he fixed to each end of the roof pinnacle. He also made a miniature Tibetan-style door curtain or *sgo yu* from a sheet of paper with decorative detail pasted to it, again cut out of coloured paper, which hung down over the front wall of the house and over the opening which represented its front door.

The intricate designs cut out from coloured paper were the work of a third monk. These were to be pasted to the side of the house or hung from the threadcross or the gables as decoration. Another, older monk was making the threadcross, whittling some long thin sticks to form the cross that would be its frame and then stretching wool of five colours—blue, white, red, light blue and yellow—across the sticks to form a lozenge shape, with a cut-out of an eight-petalled flower stuck to its centre, and long tassels of wavy paper of various colours attached to the ends of the struts like streamers, together with red paper ruffs around the central stick of the threadcross.

Beside the monks was a pot with glue, probably made from flour and water, with a stick and a spoon to stir it. They worked in front of a floor-to-ceiling bookcase with sliding glass panes on each shelf, behind which were placed faded photographs of the 10th Panchen Lama, the Dalai Lama, the Jo bo image in Lhasa, the deity Sarasvatī, and the monks' graduating class from a previous year. A stereo system below a dustcover looked unused. On one wall was a poster marked "*China's Tibet—Der Potala Palast*" and a poster of a protector deity, while on

another wall behind the monks hung a picture of the wishful filling gem on a lucky horse or *rlung rta* alongside a China Mobile calendar for the previous year showing the latest *Chexing tianxia* model of sports cars. The monks chatted about other matters while they worked, and no-one seemed to need to tell anyone else what to do, even though the designs, cut-outs, sculpting and painting were complex operations that one would have expected to have required constant coordination. They did ransom ceremonies about once a month on average, they said, though they had only done one as elaborate as this twice in each of the previous two years, since not many sponsors could afford to offer as much as us (though the amount to be offered was never discussed). While the monks were working together in the main room, two older women from among the lay attendants had gone out shopping and then brought back food which they cooked for the entire group, an important side benefit of the ceremony.

The ritual master himself spent some time in the morning helping to cut sheets of coloured paper into shapes that would be used to decorate the house. But in the afternoon, with a plastic container full of toothpicks at his side, he started to work on the central figure for the ceremony. He made it with evident facility and skill, carefully layering the dough and shaping the features, just like an expert potter or sculptor, sometimes pressing features out of the central stock of rolled dough that became its body, at other times rolling smaller tubes and adding them to the main stock to produce a more striking effect. Finally he used the tip of a pair of scissors to add detailed marks and indentations to the face, which he glazed with some viscous liquid, probably alcohol from one of two bottles that had come back in the shopping. The result was a repulsive, globular creature with hideously bulbous eyes, serpentine hair, protruding lips, and a glistening appearance. It had a metal ring around its neck as an ornament, and was wrapped in a red robe with a yellow sash made from more or less random scraps of cloth.

In this case, fortunately, the effigy was not a likeness of us, the sponsors. It turned out to be an embodiment of the obstacles or negative forces, which we had accumulated in the form of an obese, repellent-looking creature with *klu*-like features. The creature was placed on a tin plate with the male and female substitutes behind it, their heads covered. At the end of the preparations, the plate was put on a side-table in front of the cardboard house, with the *klu*-like figure and its two gender-escorts facing the front door of the house, the *sgo yu* or door cover

having been lifted up to reveal the interior. In front of the door a row of five small offering bowls with water, rice, incense and a *gtor ma* had been arranged, plus a single butter lamp. The five-coloured threadcross with its streamers and ruffs had been carefully placed by the ritual master so that its central stick—now covered with decorations made from red or yellow paper—had been pushed down through the roof of the house as if it were its central pillar. The final act of preparation had been to fix a peacock feather to the peak of the threadcross, which the ritual master had done himself.

During the afternoon a layperson had gone out to do some additional shopping and had brought back different kinds of noodles, biscuits, dried beans and other items. These had been placed within the house as well as on the tin plate with three figures, along with carefully folded bank notes. Through the front door one could see the heap of dried noodles, currency notes, beans, and biscuits in the house, and, pasted on the interior back wall, a black and white print of Dkor bdag with his distinctive *bse theb* or broad-brimmed hat, large circular earrings and crystal staff, astride a lion and swathed in flames. On the side walls within the house, hard to see from the outside, were pasted black and white prints of the generic *pho gdong* with his arrow and the *mo gdong* with her spindle, as well as the other prints that had been cut out by the older monk. The house, it was clear, was not a residence for us, the sponsors, but a palace for Dkor bdag, into which he was being enticed to move.

When all the preparations were completed, a woman swept the floor and all the scissors, paper, cardboard and debris of the construction process were removed, along with the pots of glue and food-dye. The five junior monks then gathered round a long, low table to chant the ritual itself, in the same room as the one in which they had prepared the tableau. The ritual consisted of nine texts, of which the key items were the fifth and sixth—the one to Yamāntaka, followed by the ransom ceremony itself:

-the *ltung bshags*, "The Confession of Misdeeds", in which the practitioner purifies himself

-the *skyabs 'gro*, "Taking Refuge" in the Three Jewels (the Buddha, the teachings and the community of monks), in which the practitioner revives his commitments

-the *dga' ldan lha brgya ma*, "The One Hundred Gods of the Tushita Heaven", probably here a guru yoga practice written by the 5th Dalai Lama concerning Tsong kha pa, the founder of the *Dge lugs* school

-the *yon tan gzhi gyur ma*, "The Ground of Good Qualities"
-the *'jigs byed cha tshang*, "The All Terrifying One", a prayer to Yamāntaka
-the *rgyal mdos* or "The Threadcross Ceremony for the *rgyal po* Demons"
-the *chos skyong rnams kyi gtor 'bul*, "Offering the *gtor ma* of the Protector Deities"
-the *gser skyems sna tshogs*,"Various Libations", offerings to deities
-the *bkra shis rgyas pa'o*, "A Prayer to Increase Auspiciousness"

For certain sections the monks closed their eyes for visualisation purposes and used their hand-drums, bells and *rdo rje*, as in all such ceremonies. The ritual master was not involved in the prayers—during this time, he was playing chess with a local friend, a former monk, in another room. Occasionally lay people, two of them in their teens, looking rather nervous and overawed, came in and prostrated briefly in the direction of the monks, leaving some offering or simply paying respect.

At the end of the ritual, three young men from among the lay people who had been gathered in the courtyard, probably in their early 20s, two of them with long hair and baseball caps, came into the room and picked up the ransom objects. It happened so quickly that it was easy to miss, and, like everything else, it was done without any sign of anyone giving instructions or advice: everyone seemed to know from experience what to do and when. One picked up the plate with the red-coated sharp-edged tetrahedron *gtor ma* of Yamāntaka, now with three incense sticks stuck into it, with which he would lead the procession. The second carried the house with the threadcross, and the third carried the plate with the three figures. Their small procession walked quickly and without any visible ceremony out of the room, through the courtyard and down a small mountain path in what I think was a south-easterly direction. They walked for about five minutes down the mountain until they came to a tiny junction of two paths, just beyond the perimeter of the monastery, at a point where two walls met. There was no road or stream nearby, so the spirit-palace with the threadcross was laid carefully on the ground at that miniature junction. The base of the palace was placed against one of the walls, lying on its face so that the front door and the threadcross faced the ground, with the red *gtor ma* placed in front of it like a guard blocking entry or exit to the fallen house. About six feet (c. 180 cm) away, the three figures were taken off the plate and placed by hand onto the ground amid grass and brush beside the junction of the two paths, with the noodles and biscuits scat-

Fig. 19: The effigy with *klu*-like features who represents the patrons' accumulated obstacles is placed in the grass besides the junction of two paths. The *pho gdong* and the *mo gdong*, their faces sheathed in red fabric, have been placed behind him. Raw noodles, beans, biscuits and currency notes are scattered over them. Photograph: Robert Barnett, Sku 'bum 2007

tered around them. Then the house was set alight, using as fire starters sheets of newspaper that one of the boys had carried down from the courtyard in a black plastic bag. Soon only the *gtor ma* remained, with a pile of ash nearby lying over the charred and fallen threadcross. The three figures sat in the grass some distance away, left for animals to eat. The young boys walked back up the mountain to the ritual master's house, though it was not possible to tell if they were deliberately taking care not to look back.

At the house we thanked our hosts, turned down the offer of another group meal that our sponsorship would pay for, and made the customary offering, though nothing was asked for. We gave eight hundred yuan for the day's work, equivalent to about hundred dollars at that time, somewhat more than a wealthy local might have given, we were told, though no doubt much more is sometimes given in cases of great urgency or need.

In this version of the ransom ritual, there was no human *glud* that directly represented either of us as individuals. The foodstuffs, banknotes and the spirit-palace were not ransoms so much as enticements for the spirit to move his abode from us to them. It was the male and female effigies, plus the multiple figures pressed in bas-relief from the *zan par*, that were the *glud* in this ceremony, as generic substitutes for the gendered aspects of us and our retinues and belongings, offered up as ransoms of a non-specific sort. The lay Tibetan who had arranged the ritual for us, himself a former monk and once a colleague of the ritual master, described the ritual—much as Beyer had described it in the texts he studied in Northern India thirty years earlier—as combining three methods of persuasion:

> The first method is a peaceful one. In order to make the spirit happy, a beautiful house full of treasures and two figures are made, one male and one female. The figures represent the two genders of humans, not necessarily representing a particular patient or patients. The monks tell the *klu* in their prayers that they made this beautiful house and that the two human figures, *po* and *mo*, are for him. He, the *nad bdag* ('owner of sickness'), has to leave this person or persons and this area immediately with those gifts. So, we can say that this method is the peaceful method.
>
> The second method is a tricking method or a confusing method. The *nad bdag* and his gifts are put in the middle of some streets, with the hope that the *nad bdag* won't come back or take the same route back to the site and the patient.
>
> The third method is a wrathful or forceful one. The triangular *gtor ma* is made for this purpose. That *gtor ma* represents a specific deity, in this case Yamāntaka. The monks are basically telling the *nad bdag* that he should leave this site and person immediately, and that "if you don't, we'll use our deity's power to eliminate you." It's a warning.

During the four or five hours that it took for the ritual objects to be made, plus a break for lunch, we were told something of the ritual master's history. He had become quite a well-known figure in the local community while he was training to be a *dge bshes* scholar within the monastery in the late 1980s, because at the age of twenty-two, while studying astrology, it had become noticed that he had some special aptitude for divination. Word of this had spread to the local community and he came to be consulted with increasing frequency. There were a number of Mongolians in that community and rapidly, through ethnic networks, his reputation had spread way beyond Tibetan areas and the Tibetan community to Inner Mongolia as well, and to any areas where

Mongolians were living or working. In addition, a number of Chinese people began asking him to perform divinations. His divination and ritual practice had become largely to serve these two ethnic communities. Several of the requests he received came from quite senior government officials, including one from a prefecture level official in Xinjiang. The open practice of *mo* had recommenced along with other rituals in about 1980 and the number of requests had increased steadily in recent years, he said. He had become quite well known and had even been invited to go abroad by some people who needed consultations. This had created an income stream, which apparently allowed him to maintain all or most of the monks in his group and the lay attendants, as well as to have the separate house within the monastery precincts.

During the day we saw plenty of evidence to support his account, because while making the paper cuttings for the spirit-palace he received several phone calls that asked for divinations. He answered these on his mobile phone without ceasing to cut up paper or sculpt the effigy for our ceremony. Sometimes he used his beads during the phone call to perform a divination and to give an interpretation immediately, all within the course of the phone call. One of those calls, he explained to us, was from a Chinese businessman calling from Xinjiang, in the far north-west of China, where he owned a fence building company. A worker in the company had just fallen on a fence and injured his genitals and the businessman wanted the ritual master to perform a divination as to how this would turn out, in order to know how best to handle the situation.

In between these calls, the *dge bshes* discussed with us some of the factors which decide whether a ransom ritual will be effective. They cannot succeed, he explained, and "will fail like a rocket", if the problem that the sponsor or patient suffers from is a result of his karma or actions in the past. In such cases the rituals are ineffective and only a Buddhist remedy, such as prostrations, pilgrimage and other practices involving generating of positive karma, can work. A ransom ritual can only be effective when the sponsor is afflicted by 'obstacles' (*bar chad*) that have been introduced by a spirit. A *mo* can usually determine in each case whether the cause is karmic or an obstacle.

After some time, the *dge bshes* told us of another reason why he thought the ransom rituals and his divination practices might fail: he was doubtful that they worked. He gave this view in front of the other monks, who perhaps shared this opinion. He was ambivalent about the

practice: in his view, the practices were not part of Buddhism. Some of the other *dge bshes* or senior teachers in the monastery were opposed to them being done at all by monks. But he and his group believed that they should still carry the practices out if lay people asked them to do so and found them helpful, because they provided solace, often at times when people were in distress. If someone asks, he said, he would never reject them and would do the divinations and, if necessary, the ransom ritual.

There was no reason to doubt the sincerity of his concern for ordinary people's welfare. Indeed, he seemed a little embarrassed to admit to his doubts, not because he thought of them as patronising towards believers, but because it implied a modernist lack of faith on his part, as if it were a failure of commitment to the community and its cultural tradition.

Fig. 20: The array of life-size figures let by a priapic demon/ess and a camel, part of an unidentified ceremony in Kham. Photograph: Lucy Hornby, Kham, Sichuan 2005 (from Photoset 12)

5. Ritual as Political Metaphor

The contemporary framing of the ritual makes it more than a question of cultural revival. It is a public event as well as a private practice in the home, a social action as well as a religious ceremony within a monastery, and its ramifications are multiple. The discarded beer box that appears in the centre of the public street is a silent dissonance, out of key with the "main melody" of state narrative, progress and modernity. The spatial discordance, the unseemliness, of unseen locals placing examples of their spirit trickery in the hygienic, ordered, public and modern spaces of the city raise questions with regard to the Chinese state-building project that has claimed ownership of those spaces. Each loaded box might provoke, we can imagine, a miniature crisis of meaning and allegiance towards the city project, perhaps even little shocks of recognition or surprise, prompting passers-by to re-calibrate their positions and their views. It might be seen in many ways—as discarded rubbish by a uninformed pedestrian, as backward superstition by a modernist, as an exotic instance of surviving local colour by a visitor seeking a lost past, as a triumphant resurgence of native expression by a cultural nationalist, or as a furtive hiding of the forbidden or the liminal in the 'wrapper' of the ordinary by those who see in Chinese-Tibetan relations a drama of pursuit and evasion.

Within this range of potential explanations, the contemporary meanings and functions of the ceremony for the participant community are difficult to elucidate. Scholars so far have offered different intellectual frameworks for considering such performances of ritual in Tibet today. The anthropologist Yu Changjiang responded to Tibetan rituals in a pragmatic way: he went to look for the spirits to see if they were really there. Yu, an eloquent critic of normative conceptions in China about 'progress' and social evolution, and of assumptions that religion is antithetical to modernity, was told a 'ghost story' by a Tibetan in the village near Lhasa where he did his research in 1990 or shortly after. The story described an incident in the 'old society' before 1959 when some noblemen had been attacked and killed by a group of spirits as they tried to ride across a stone bridge near the village. Several other stories had reported spirits at that same place, so Yu went to the bridge and "stayed up around that bridge after midnight and even later all through the night several times". He notes, with disappointment rather than disdain, that "nothing strange happened" (2006: 270). His response is that

of the relativist, respecting another value system as equal in worth to one's own, while at the same time testing it with the tools of empirical enquiry that are characteristic of modern rationalism, and, naturally, finding nothing.

A second interpretative framework is the critique of modern culture offered by the sociologists of the Frankfurt school, drawing on the insights of Walter Benjamin, where modernity and the urban landscape are seen as a dream-world, one in which the mystification Marx perceived as the source of commodity fetishism has been further elaborated to produce re-enchantment and allure, but which somehow can stimulate a certain political consciousness among the masses trapped within it.

> Underneath the surface of increasing systemic rationalization, on an unconscious 'dream' level, the new urban-industrial world had become fully reenchanted. In the modern city, as in the ur-forests of another era, the 'threatening and alluring face' of myth was alive and everywhere … "the commodities are suspended and shoved together in such boundless confusion, that [they appear] like images out of the most incoherent dreams" (Buck-Morris 1999: 254).[72]

Ronald Schwartz has noted the centrality of commodity mystification and trickery in both this vision of late consumer capitalism and in Tibetan dealings with spirits. Commenting on this parallelism between urban, mediatic modernity and the spirit transactions, he writes:

> As with the mystification process in commodity fetishism, the *glud* transaction involves an exchange of incommensurables. With commodity fetishism it is use values, with the *glud* ritual it is the things valued by the spirit for things valued by humans. And it is the 'magical' labour of the ritualist that effects the exchange… The *glud* ritual are rehearsals for dealing with a 'spiritized' public realm, which is how I think modernity is experienced in Lhasa. This I think was what Benjamin was thinking. The world inside the *glud* is so like the Arcades described by Benjamin—little miniature worlds of desire, fantasy projections (phantasmagoria), commodity fetishism, deception, colonial artifacts. Only here [in the modernity of consumer capitalism] it is the humans who are lost, trapped, condemned to wander forever in the dream-world. The *glud* ritual then offers both a rehearsal for modernity and the knowledge to overcome it. … The *glud* ritual could be understood (like perhaps the cargo cult) as offering direct access to the fruits of modernity while tacitly but forcefully circumventing the state (its political significance) (personal communication, February 2, 2009).

---

[72] The quotation from is from Part V of Benjamin's *Arcades* (2002: 993, A° 5).

In this perception, both worlds require those caught within them to recognise the complex web of understanding and capacity needed to survive in these particular environments. The survival skills required in these worlds need constant tuning and refining to meet the demands of the different systems, especially to deal with the complexities of the mystified practices of exchange and transaction. In this view, the *glud* narratives offer a way of acquiring those skills, familiarising participants with the confusing rhetoric of power-relations and unequal transactions and implying that ways can be learnt to handle these.

Erik Mueggler, in his ethnography of a Yi community in south-west China, sees the ability to interact with the spirit world not as a rehearsal for modernity but as a recourse, a domain within which to work out terms for dealing with the state and its demands by drawing on cultural values which are richer and inclusive. This, says Mueggler, is not "imperial metaphor" or a charming local translation exercise:

> This premise—that the language of Chinese folk religion relates to political language as the extended term of a metaphor to its proper term—has been foundational for the anthropology of China. … Put simply, these discussions assert that Chinese peasants speak of gods, ghosts, and ancestors as metaphors for officials, strangers, and kin, perhaps to legitimate state authority, perhaps to learn about it, perhaps to resist or manipulate it. [But the Yi ritual master's statement] did not 'mystify' or 'misrecognize' the state by refashioning it metaphorically as the realm of the sky, from which power descends. … It was a resource for thinking *past the limits* of the vocabulary of political determinations and effects towards that which was most fundamental about state power to the lives infused by it. It was a resource for thinking about co-existence with a state imagined as a forceful unity … [it] invoked the state as at once an alien Other, vast and distant as the sky, and an interior Other, a 'strange thing' disturbing one's own thoughts… penetrating head and womb to disturb what is within (2001: 316).

The community he describes is rural and poor, and its encounter with modernity and the state had not had the dreamlike qualities of commodity-rich cities: its experience had been a nightmare of violation by a largely invisible force. In particular, its members had to live with the experience of apparently meaningless violence carried out against women by sterilisation programs and other forms of social and bodily improvement: the women appeared to sense the unseen state as "a gaze elusive of comprehension… [that] circumscribed their pasts, summing them up as members of the 'Yi nationality', economically backward,

with generally inferior qualities… as it counted and assessed their fertile and infertile wombs" (2001: 318–19). The community rituals recreate what Mueggler calls "generative unity" and thus offer ways of dealing with that nightmare. In complex ways they make sense of the inchoate violence inflicted by an unseen power by opening it up to "the force of imagination" through collective acts that reaffirm values and meaning in the face of loss and negation, and that create a space within which to explore possibilities of negotiation and mitigation with the shapeless, incomprehending state.

A third route, that offered by the ethnographers of resistance, sees ritual as a form of potential political agency, as having the potential to become a "hidden transcript" (Scott 1985). If so, it is a transcript in which it is not always clear who or what is being challenged, mocked or exorcised. As Taussig put it, perhaps more innocently, writing of the effigies made by Cuna Indians in Panama, "the magic of mimesis is that… 'in some way or another' the making and existence of the artefact that portrays something gives one power over that which is portrayed" (1993: 13). Since power is at stake, such rituals necessarily approach the political and will sometimes enter that terrain. In the contemporary Tibetan case, the effigy practice is rife with potential for semantic slippage from the personal and the spiritual to the public and the political. For those with longer memories, the history of these rituals locates them within a larger political story of the nation. The *glud* practice is a miniaturised, domestic form of the *glud 'gong* and *gtor rgyag* ceremonies, which are effectively the same ritual applied, using humans or life-size effigies, to an entire community or state to rid it or its leaders of obstacles, enemies or invaders,[73] and which are still prac-

[73] I am grateful to Lopen Lungtaen Gyatso for clarifying this connection (personal communication, December 28, 2008). For discussions of historical instances of these and other rituals, notably *dmag zlog*, to repel invaders, see Schaeffer (2006), Gentry (2009), and Pommaret (2008). The annual state *gtor rgyag* (which dealt with unseen enemies) was held in Lhasa on the 24th of the first month each year (though others say the last day of the twelfth month). A special version of the ceremony to ward off Chinese invasion was photographed by Richardson in 1948, according to his notes: "A special *gtor rgyag* on 25th July 1948 directed against the threat from Chinese Communists, prayer ceremony near old Chinese Yamen on east south of city, large body of monks, chanting, and clapping hands slowly; a special *gtor ma* lit by the Gnas chung Oracle, contained many strange things including a human skin. At the end of the ceremony a great storm of wind, dust and thunder suddenly blew up from a clear sky" (Richardson's Handlist, see http://tibet.prm.ox.ac.uk/photo_2001.59.5.49.1.html). The Tibet Album website at Pitt Rivers Museum notes this date was probably an error for 1949 or 1950.

ticed outside Tibet.[74] In those ceremonies we see that the rituals are not static or lifeless sculptures, but lived performances, re-enacted dramas of perilous encounters with dangerous powers who eventually are outwitted. They replay in essence the foundational legends of the *glud rabs*, which were accounts of saving the lives of Tibetan kings and princes, and therefore of the nation and its continuity. The private practice is thus run through with potential recollections that it is or was a form of drama, a drama about national or collective salvation and restitution.

This ambiguity runs throughout the logic of the ransom practice. Its central propositions are that illnesses and misfortunes of a non-medical kind are brought to a place or person by the incursion of powerful, alien spirits into one's space, and that those aliens can be persuaded to accept a ransom in exchange for temporarily leaving that person or that space. It is, in short, a way of dealing with intrusive foreign forces. The secondary concepts that underlie the detailed workings of the ransom practice read like a manual of ways to deal with powerful outsiders. It presupposes that successful dealings with harmful forces depend on a knowledge of one's own past and theirs, including myths and legends; that a human can succeed in those dealings through detailed understanding of the aliens' value-system and their habits of desire; that the human can outwit or trick them, at least briefly, through mastery of ritual performance and artistic skill; and that ability with words and lavish description is essential to the transaction. In addition, to be successful the local human must exploit his or her understanding of the alien's psychology—he or she must know, for example, that these aliens become obsessed with the pursuit of their desire, and that in crises and in ambiguously marked locations they have only an unclear grasp of where they have come from and how they got there. In such circumstances, aliens and spirits can be tactically, momentarily confused.

[74] Notably the *gtor rgyag* held annually at Rta dbang, now a part of Arunachal Pradesh in India, on the 28th of the 11th month (see http://www.articlesbase.com/art-and-entertainment-articles/tawangtorgyaa-festival-of-the-monpas-233804.html). A large-scale set of practices in many monasteries across the Tibetan cultural area is said to have been organized by the exile government for the health of the Dalai Lama in 1994, and it was reportedly to help arrange this that the exile lama Khams sprul Rinpoche travelled to Mustang, a trip described in the documentary *Mustang: the Hidden Kingdom* (Tony Miller, 1994). In Bhutan the *rgya nag spyi mdos* ritual is organized annually at the Pha ri zam pa astrological college near Thimphu for the well-being of the country, the royal family and the head-abbot of Bhutan (Dorjee 2003; Françoise Pommaret, personal communication, Dec 29, 2008).

The underlying thesis of the ritual is that subalterns can briefly assert themselves against foreign domination and intrusion if they have cultural and historical knowledge both of themselves and of the Other. It rests on a perception that powerful Others, dominant rulers from afar, rarely if ever have knowledge of their new subjects' values or traditions. The intruders therefore can be played or even duped.

Colonising powers, it appears, tend to follow value systems that centuries of study of powerful local spirits appear to have predicted. Indeed, the ritual manuals and customs provide a series of other parallels that can be drawn between spirits in Tibetan exorcism rituals and outsiders ruling unfamiliar territories. Both are at times benevolent and at other times domineering and intrusive. Both almost always require endless praise, performances of loyalty, and constantly restated contracts promising to deliver what they desire. They exhibit an addiction to verbose statements overstating those deliverables. They frequently promise to trade what they think the subject wants (often incorrectly) in return for these deliveries. In particular, they sometimes promise to withdraw partially from intruding into local space, even promising to grant autonomy, but typically will return in anger at the slightest perceived slight or upset.

In both cases, it is knowledge of the alien value system and its terms of trade that enables the colonised subject to purchase brief relief from some of the difficulties and damage that come with the aliens' presence. At times, with skill, the subject will engross the power-holders with that which they most urgently desire, usually professions of loyalty. These professions will sometimes confuse the visitors for a period as to the reality or durability of these ritualised enactments; they will be overwhelmed by delight at the protestations of loyalty and offerings of submission. And one can even say that when these protestations and offerings disintegrate, become stale or are exposed as empty, the visitor, perceiving himself as duped by his short-lived acquisition of contentment, will typically lash out in all directions in revenge, unsure as to exactly whom or what deceived him or got him to that place. The subaltern will again attempt to soothe, divert, or pacify the angry ruler/spirit with more paeans of loyalty and tribute, more offerings and transactions. Unlike the dramas of western story, these episodes have not ultimate victory, when all is restored forever. Instead, they are cyclical, like the legends on which they are based, and each success will last only for a while before failing yet again and will have to be repeated.

Ironically, these are the basic skills and practices of the market place, the same domain where post-reform China claims its people to be the most advanced relative to its non-Chinese nationalities. In fact, those trained in the spirit world might be more skilled in many ways, since spirit trading could be said to be trickier than its material counterpart—it is unregulated and subjective, and its rules are nowhere written down or codified in languages that the state can comprehend and must be learnt through collective transmission.

Such ironies need not be conscious or intended for the public placement of the effigies to raise questions about the modern project. A box placed at a crossroads may signify no more than briefly reclaiming a part of the busy street for the purposes and values of its original inhabitants, if that. In other cases, such as mocking Chinese drivers for serving local needs by driving over effigies, we see the slippage of religious ritual into a kind of politics. In cases where it is believed that the Chinese drivers risk being infected by the spirits they unwittingly drive over, the perceptions of onlookers may acquire an edge of manipulation and malevolence. All of this may be implicit or unconscious. But underlying such incidental inscriptions of the small moment with political meaning is an echo of the past: the history of ransom rituals is that in their most important forms they were performed for entire communities including the nation and its leaders, rather than for individuals. And so it is not surprising if sometimes one finds explicit statements of this slippage between domestic ritual and public politics. My informant T, speaking outside the country, claimed that the *glud* rituals are sometimes consciously directed against the state:

> If in a village a lama is invited by the whole village to rid it of something, maybe to get rid of some people or government, then… it is an alternative to protest. That is why they do it. […] We don't have guns to kill but we can do this ritual (Interview, October 19, 2007).

This is hard to verify, since any political intentions of this kind would generally be kept secret. One large-scale public exorcism ceremony is reported to have been held in Nyi mtsho monastery near Rta'u (Ch. Daofu) in Kham/Sichuan in April 2008—one of the first known instances of that ceremony being held in a Tibetan area within China since 1958—and it led to major confrontation with the Chinese security forces. The circumstances, however, are unclear. Exiles reported that the Nyi mtsho monks had conducted a *gtor rgyag* ceremony inside a

temple and were about to begin the 'disposal' section of the ritual, which takes place in public space outside the monastery, when security forces ordered the ritual to be stopped, again for reasons that are unclear. Major protests by Tibetans against the Chinese authorities had taken place a few days earlier and some had ended with the deaths of Tibetans at the hands of security forces, but the *gtor rgyag* can be performed in order to cleanse a community of numerous ailments besides political threats or military occupation, and it is not known if those recent protests were connected to the ceremony. The intervention by the security forces (probably the People's Armed Police) at Nyi mtsho led to a protest by local people against the soldiers and officials who had stopped the ceremony, and in that protest ten people were reportedly shot and wounded by the armed police.[75]

Apart from this case, I do not know of explicitly political applications of the ransom process in modern times inside Tibet, and it seems that most instances, particularly those with miniature effigies, are for individual cases of severe illness and misfortune. But the potential for political subtext is always present within the *glud* and other forms of exorcism ritual: they are inherently ambiguous in the modern context, and may have been so in the past as well. Just as they take place outside the perimeters of a community or at its crossroads, so are they implicitly connected to outsider views of the current ruling system. In the past they meant that the state itself had to negotiate with powerful spirit forces in order to survive. In the modern form, they evince an attitude to dominant thinking and dominant institutions that is resilient if not resistant: they propose immersion in local tradition in preference to or alongside new forms of knowledge, they declare that there are limits to the capacity of modern medicine, they display a suspicion that state rhetoric with its promises of health and materialist explanations of misfortune might not work, and in some cases they even mock the incomprehension of outsiders.

We end up where we began: Tibetans standing as spectators in the city streets watching the foreigners' parade of progress and applauding

[75] See Jane Macartney, "Tibetans wounded as Chinese police fire on pilgrim protest" (*The Times*, April 7, 2008; http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/-article3694762.ece). This gives the name of the monastery as "Lingque", the sinicised name for Nyi mtsho. Referred to by Radio Free Asia as Mintso and by Gyurme Dorje (*Tibet Handbook*) as Nyitso. The reasons for holding the ceremony or for the authorities breaking it up are not known.

as it marches by. For those Tibetans, there was clearly no doubt that a political, real-world invasion by visible embodied soldiers with lethal weapons should be dealt with, all other methods having failed, in the same way one deals with disembodied spirits whose weapons cannot be seen. That is not to say that the distinctions are not obvious to all Tibetans, since they certainly are; it is to say that the methods that seem to work with one might at least be worth trying with the other. With Younghusband and the British, the public ritual act in the streets was exorcism by clapping (many more complex exorcism rituals had been done in monasteries before the British arrived), whereas now what we see is exorcism by effigy construction and disposal at the crossroads. The political subtext of the modern rituals remains unclear and unannounced to outside observers. The 1904 rituals were not comprehended by the visitors at the time and it remains to be seen if the present ones are understood by the current visitors and intruders. In both cases the magic failed to work, at least in the short term. But Tibetan intellectuals, from Skar ma Babu and Shan kha ba in 1904 up till my informant T today, found another, partial achievement in these rituals: they read their misinterpretation or misrecognition by foreigners as a kind of vindication of the subaltern, and as a display of the limited knowledge capacity of aggressive foreigners, much like the Tibetans who are amused by Chinese driving over effigies. Their perception is ironic, and they write almost as if Tibetans were consciously manipulating the knowledge deficit of the powerful, or at least taking advantage of it once exposed. And conscious manipulation of the knowledge deficit of the powerful is the practice at the heart of the ransom ritual. That implied assumption of local subjects' agency may never manifest in openly articulated social or political confrontation, but ransom rituals remain a fertile ground for the sophisticated enhancement of cultural pride and for celebrating local self-knowledge and its incomprehension by alien intruders convinced of their own superiority.

Conclusion

We can see that the *glud* practice is a very ancient part of Tibetan tradition, one that has an important, perhaps primary, place among the forms of exorcism that are carried out in Tibetan cultures to reverse unfavourable conditions or to cure those instances of ill health that do

Fig. 21: An effigy at a crossroads, still erect, but without the hat, robes, hands, ornaments or the dye, which have melted in the sun. Photograph: Robert Barnett, Lhasa 2005

not respond to medical treatment. It probably predates Buddhism, may have non-Indian origins, and has long been incorporated into the mainstream of Bon, Buddhist, and popular practice in Tibet, even though in some Buddhist circles and in important texts it is looked down upon. The practice takes many different forms and has produced in the manuals, which describe the many and varied rituals of this type, a rich and creative body of literature. Although there are important communal or state forms of ransom ritual, it is most commonly encountered as a private, domestic practice that can be done by lay people. But even in many of its common forms the practice requires specialist knowledge of the liturgy and specific rituals, and even of astrology and divination.

These practices re-emerged in Lhasa some twenty years after the Chinese state began to ostracise religion, once the state tentatively began to tolerate certain forms of religious practice again. The *glud gtor* practice has since become, to those aware of it, a modern, urban practice. Until much more open conditions for research, study and private discussion exist in Tibet, it is impossible to assess to what extent

previous knowledge of such domestic rituals has been recovered, to know how it has changed, or to know how these practices are carried out in homes or how they are thought about by individual participants. But judging from public displays of the results of the ritual and from the private ceremony in Amdo, this tradition has become extremely widespread in Tibet, it is practiced in many Tibetan households, and it is widely found in urban as well as rural communities. Younger ritual specialists have emerged who are familiar with the relevant texts and proficient at carrying out the necessary practices, such as the construction of the effigies, the *pho* and *mo gdong*, and the spirit-palaces—knowledge that does not exist in texts and that can only have been conveyed to them orally or through bodily memory. Much of their work in effigy construction stands in its own right as form of art, as aesthetic and often remarkable enhancement of the city's public spaces by the hands of unknown artists. In some cases the specialisation has become a form of income generation, a meaningful element in social relations and within communities, one that creates status and social significance for practitioners. It has also become trans-ethnic (as probably it was in the past): Tibetan specialists, especially in border areas, are asked and paid by non-Tibetans, including Chinese people who may not be Buddhists, to carry out the rituals.

The Maoist era, especially the years between 1959 and 1979 in Central Tibetan areas and from at least three years earlier in the eastern regions, was a catastrophic experience for many people as well as devastating for social and cultural institutions. Since then, or at least since the early 1990s, many policies have been introduced that have again been traumatic for some sectors of Tibetan society. But older people and ritual specialists who survived the earlier episodes have been able to some extent, perhaps to a very considerable extent, to retain, revive, or retransmit to a younger generation a certain amount of knowledge about popular religious practices. As far as one can tell, the underlying principles of these practices are recognised and perhaps shared by members of many social sectors: participants in the practices include those born in the 1980s as well as those born in 1970s, all of whom would have been educated, if they received any schooling, according to purely secular curricula with no religious content. Their classes would almost certainly have included some lessons or readings specifically aimed to denigrate superstitious beliefs and practices.

These practices are not, of course, an exotic spectacle or an uninflected reconstruction of the past. The recovery or reconstitution of traditions is not by any means a static process, nor is it one in which a stable plateau of so-called cultural recovery is ever reached. The new or revived practices will necessarily have acquired particular meanings and implications, and the discursive framework within which the practices now take place will have changed irrevocably. For one thing, religious belief and practice have been marked by the state as retrogressive, un-modern, of dubious value, and in need of social monitoring and control. This is even more the case with what the state defines from time to time as superstition. Domestic ritual in the urban population remains an untested zone between the tolerably religious and the semi-visible, borderline world of so-called superstition. For another, modernity, with its dream-like streams of shock-like images and values screaming for immediacy and sensation, is also present at every crossroads, challenging the *glud* for possession of the streets.

For government employees and students, household ritual is an even more difficult zone to navigate. They constitute most of the new, educated middle class in Lhasa, and they were banned from carrying out any forms of religious practice or belief—if these are Buddhist and they are Tibetans—in 1996 or shortly afterwards, whether these are deemed 'superstitious' or not. Since then, there has been no comforting arc of progress in tolerance or relaxation in the Tibetan story, as proponents of economic progress have often claimed: although the arc of modern construction and infrastructural development has been clear in all Tibetan and Chinese towns, official tolerance of religious institutions and belief-based customs in Tibet has not increased. In particular, following the unrest of March 2008, there was yet another reinvigoration in the cycle of media attacks on the religious standing of the Dalai Lama, a stepping up of a process that has dominated official discourse in Tibet since such denunciations were made part of official Tibet policy in 1994. For those involved in religious practices of one kind or another, at least those in the urban areas, the pressures and uncertainties have increased.

Young Tibetan children in Lhasa today face pressures more persuasive than those the previous generation faced from ideologists in the 1960s and 1970s or that their parents endure at the hands of suspicious officials today: the powerful narratives of rationality and secularity generated by globalised images of modernity on state television and in

films, advertisements and popular music. Many of these young people are clearly aware of the significance of ritual practices and beliefs and accept their primary theses, since they pull back foreigners from approaching effigies in the street. From a modernist perspective, this acceptance by the young of customary beliefs represents an anachronistic revival, one that may turn out to be a temporary or local given the state's efforts to spread secularist, atheist values and its unease about unauthorised belief-based traditions.

But from a post-modernist point of view, what takes place in the Lhasa streets is a co-habitation of global modernity and religiously-informed perceptions. Such combinations are not oppositional but intrinsic to social existence. They are constitutive of modernity, with its constant reformations and its contradictory absorption of apparent opposites. The doubts expressed by the monks at Sku 'bum about the efficacy of their own ransom rituals are not signs of some increasingly corrosive spread of secularity and doubt, but more akin to a reappearance of the ironic distancing found in Skar ma Babu and Shan kha ba towards Tibetan clapping when the British invaded, or of the much older Buddhist strategy of distancing its self-proclaimed elevated practices from the demotic magical dealings with the mundane that its teachers associated with the Bon and the lay community, and yet—as 'Jam mgon Kong sprul noted wryly in the 19th century—practised frequently themselves (Blondeau 1987: 103). For their contemporary successors, the mundane is perhaps represented nowadays by the state, maybe even by the Chinese masses, from among whom many of their customers for exorcism and divination come. In either case, the doubt is more a traditional rhetorical manoeuvre rather than a sign of diminishing engagement with ritual transactions with the spirit world.

From this perspective, the meanings of social practices appear as constantly in flux and suffused with ambiguities and contradiction. People who describe themselves in terms that are ardently materialist may carry out spirit-transactions without any sense of irony. The rituals may be seen simultaneously as the performing of outmoded, ignorant beliefs and as the retelling of ancient stories that contest, undermine or reorder current modes of thought. Those stories are told through miniaturised dramas in which the effigies have starring roles, with each cardboard box its own one-foot-square theatre of collective memories, an archive of half-remembered legends and a sculpture gallery of semi-mythical figures who appear in the city streets. The sto-

ries may shift seamlessly to and fro between being accounts about the manipulation of malicious spirits to being legends about deposed kings, lost nations, the trouncing of disdainful foreigners, or the expulsion through tricky transactions of alien intruders. The state's progressivist denunciations of Tibetan and other forms of ritual are just as likely to end with the transformation of these practices into vectors of political awareness or challenge as with their demise. At a deeper level, the role of these rituals as rehearsal for modernity and as recourse from state violence may already be in play, with the contemporary *glud* providing sites in the imagination in which future transactions with powerful, temperamental and alien forces are prepared, played out and dramatised. For the moment, however, the soiled and crumpled cardboard boxes, with their crushed effigies and crumbling palaces in miniature, appear to function much as they did when the British entered Lhasa a century earlier: silent rituals of applause at the parade of progress as it passes through the city streets.

Bibliography

Achard, J. L. (ed.) 2002 *Revue d'études tibétaines 2*. Numéro Spécial *Lha srin sde brgyad*. Paris: Centre de recherche sur les civilisations chinoise, japonaise et tibétaine (UMR 8155).

Anon. 1982 *Nang khul gyi dus deb yin bas nyar chags bya rgyud do snang byed dgos, in Bod ljongs 'phrin deb*. ("Tibet Information Book"), Volume 9 (2nd July, 1982), pp. 39ff., partially published in translation as The Heroes of Ling: Elimination of a Sect, *Background Papers on Tibet - September 1992, Part 2*. London: Tibet Information Network, 1992: 30–33.

Asboe, W. 1936 The Scape-goat in Western Tibet. *Man*, vol. 36: 74–75.

Balikci-Denjongpa, A. 2006 Ritual in Sikkim: expressions of cultural identity and change among the Lhopos. *In* Christiaan Klieger (ed.) *Tibetan Borderlands. Proceedings of the International Association for Tibetan Studies*. Oxford 2003. Boston: Brill, 127–56.

Barnett, R. (ed.) 1998 *A Poisoned Arrow: The Secret Petition of the 10th Panchen Lama*. London: Tibet Information Network.

—— 2003 Chen Kuiyuan and the marketisation of policy. *In* Alex McKay (ed.) *Tibet and Her Neighbours*. London: Edition Hansjörg Mayer, 207–26.

Barnett, R. with M. Spiegel 1996 *Cutting off the Serpent's Head: Tightening Control in Tibet, 1994–95*. London: TIN, and New York: Human Rights Watch.

Beyer, S. 1978 *The Cult of Tara: Magic and Ritual in Tibet*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 310–59.

Bhum, Pema. 2001 *Six Stars with a Crooked Neck: Tibetan Memoirs of the Cultural Revolution*. Dharamsala: Tibet Times.

Blondeau, A. M. 1971. Le *Lha 'dre bka' thaṅ*. *Études tibétaines dédiées à la mémoire de Marcelle Lalou*, Paris: Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient, 29–126.

—— 1986–1987. Religions tibétaines. *Annuaire de l'École pratique des Hautes Études*, Ve Section, Vol. XCV, 100–106.
—— 1987–1988. Religions tibétaines. *Annuaire de l'École pratique des Hautes Études*, Ve Section, Vol. XCVI, 76–81.
—— 1988–1989. Religions tibétaines. *Annuaire de l'École pratique des Hautes Études*, Ve Section, Vol. XCVII, 82–86.
—— 1989–1990a. Religions tibétaines. *Annuaire de l'École pratique des Hautes Études*, Ve Section, Vol. XCVIII, 110–16.
—— 1990b. Questions préliminaires sur les rituels *mdos*. *In* Fernand Meyer (ed.) *Tibet. Civilisation et société*. Paris: Éditions de la Fondation Singer-Polignac/ Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 91–107.
Buck-Morris, S. 1999 *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
Buffetrille, K. 2004 Jeu et rituel ou comment le jeu peut être un rituel : le *glu/klu rol* du sixième mois dans la région de Reb gong (A mdo), *Études mongoles et sibériennes, centrasiatiques et tibétaines* no 35, 203–29.
—— 2008 Some remarks on mediums: the case of the *lha pa* of the musical festival (*glu rol*) of Sog ru (A mdo), *Mongolo-Tibetica Pragensia* '08, 1(2), Prague: Charles University, 13–66.
Cai Zhiming. 1937 *Jinzang riji* (Diary on the way to Tibet). Adapted and published by Wangwaimajia (penname) at blog.sina.com.cn/huangxiaofeng. Accessed April 8, 2009.
Cantwell, C. and R. Mayer 2006 Why did the Phur pa tradition become so prominent in Tibet? Paper delivered at the Xth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Bonn. In manuscript.
Connerton, P. 1989 *How Societies Remember.* Cambridge [England] and New York: Cambridge University Press.
Cuevas, B. J. 2009. Mipam's 'Calf's Nipple' (*Be'u bum*): A handbook of Tibetan ritual magic. *In* J. I. Cabezón (ed.), *Tibetan Ritual.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 165–86.
Cummins, J. 2006 Nazis in Tibet: The Search for the Origins of the Aryan Race. *In* J. Cummins, *History's Great Untold Stories: Obscure and Fascinating Accounts with Important Lessons for the World.* Sydney: Murdoch Books, 322–33.
Cutler, N. S. 1991 The early rulers of Tibet: their lineage and burial rites. *In* Alex McKay (ed.), *History of Tibet*, vol. 1, London: Routledge, 2003, 165–80.
Dalton, J. and S. van Schaik *Catalogue of the Tibetan Tantric Manuscripts from Dunhuang in the Stein Collection*. Second electronic edition (2007) http://idp.bl.uk: IDP, 2005. Also published by the same authors as *Tibetan Tantric Manuscripts from Dunhuang: A Descriptive Catalogue of the Stein Collection at the British Library. Brill's Tibetan Studies Library*, 12. Leiden: Brill, 2006.
Diemberger, H. 2005 Female Oracles in Modern Tibet. *In* J. Gyatso and H. Havnevik (eds) *Women in Tibet, Past and Present*. London : Hurst & Company, 113–68.
Dollfus, P. 1994. 'Porte de la Terre, Porte du Ciel': un rituel de rançon au Ladakh. *In* P. Kvaerne (ed.) *Tibetan studies.* Oslo: Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture, 1994, 1, 178–96.
—— 2003 De quelques histoires de *klu* et de *btsan*, *Revue d'études tibétaines* 2, 4–39.
Dorjee, Urgyen. 2003 *'Brug lugs mdos glud kyi ngo sprod kun phan phyogs kyi mu khyud* (The encircling sun benefitting all – an introduction to the ransom rituals in Bhutanese tradition). *In* Zhungtsi Lopen (ed.). *Thimphu*: Astrologer Institute Dechhen Chholing, Pangrizampa.

Dpal ldan bkra shis and Kevin Stuart. 1998. Perilous Novelties. The A mdo Tibetan *Klu rol* Festival in Gling rgyal Village, *Anthropos*, 93, 31–53.

Epstein, L. and Peng Weibin 1998 Ritual, Ethnicity, and Generational Identity, *In* M. C. Goldstein and M. Kapstein (eds.), *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet. Religious Revival and Cultural Identity. Berkeley*: University of California Press, 120–38.

French, P. 1994 *Younghusband*: *The Last Great Imperial Adventurer*. London: HarperCollins, 1994.

Gentry, J. 2009 Representations of Efficacy: the Ritual Expulsion of Mongol Armies in the Consolidation and Expansion of the Tsang (Gtsang) Dynasty. *In* J. I. Cabezón (ed.), *Tibetan Ritual*. New York: Oxford University Press, 131–63.

Germano, D. 1998 Remembering the Dismembered Body of Tibet. *In* M. C. Goldstein and M. Kapstein (eds.), *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet. Religious Revival and Cultural Identity.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 53–94.

Guidoni, R. 1998 *L'ancienne cérémonie d'État du glud 'gong rgyal po à Lhasa*. Unpublished M.A. thesis in Anthropology, Université Paris X-Nanterre.

Havnevik, H. 1994 The role of nuns in contemporary Tibet. *In* Robert Barnett (ed.) *Resistance and Reform in Tibet.* Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 259–66.

Hilary, J. 1992 Postscript: Note on Chinese Policies towards Sects in the 1980s. *Background Papers on Tibet - September 1992, Part 2.* London: Tibet Information Network, 33–34.

Hill, N. W. 2006 The Old Tibetan Chronicle, Chapter 1, *Revue d'études tibétaines*, 10: 89–101.

Holdich, Col. Sir Thomas Hungerford 1906 *Tibet, the Mysterious*. Part of the series The Story of Exploration (series editor: J. Scott Keltie). London: Alston Rivers.

Kalsang Norbu (Skal bzang nor bu), Zhu Yongzhong and K. Stuart. 1999 A ritual winter exorcism in Gnyan thog village, Qinghai. *Asian Folklore Studies*, 58(1), 189–203.

Kapstein, M. 1998 A pilgrimage of rebirth reborn: The 1992 Celebration of the Drigung Powa Chenmo. *In* M. C. Goldstein and M. Kapstein (eds.) *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet. Religious Revival and Cultural Identity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 95–120.

Karmay, S. G. 1998a. The soul and the turquoise: a ritual for recalling the *bla*. *The Arrow and the Spindle: Studies in History, Myths, Rituals and Beliefs in Tibet.* 1, Kathmandu: Mandala Book Point, 310–38.

—— 1998b The man and the ox: a ritual for offering the *glud*. In *The Arrow and the Spindle: Studies in History, Myths, Rituals and Beliefs in Tibet*. Kathmandu: Mandala Book Point, 339–79.

—— 2003 Une note sur l'origine du concept des huit catégories d'esprits, *Revue d'études tibétaines* 2, 67–80.

Kirkland, J. R. 2003 [1982] The spirit of the mountain: myth and state in pre-Buddhist Tibet. *In* Alex McKay (ed.) *History of Tibet*, 1, London: Routledge, 181–92.

Kvaerne, P. 1985 *Tibet Bon Religion: A Death Ritual of the Tibetan Bonpos. Iconography of Religions XII, 13.* Institute of Religious Iconography, State University of Groningen. Leiden: Brill.

Kvaerne, P. 1995a *The Bon Religion of Tibet.* London/Chicago: Serindia.

Kvaerne, P. 1995b. French Contributions to Himalayan and Tibetan Studies. *Kailash*, 17 (1 and 2), 1–10.

Imaeda, Y. 1979 Une note sur le rite du *Glud-'goṅ rgyal-po* d'après les sources chinoises, *Journal Asiatique*, nos. 3–4, 333–39.

Landon, P. 1905 LHASA: *An account of the country and people of central Tibet and of the progress of the mission sent there by the English Government in the year 1903–1904*. II. London: Hurst and Blackett.
Lessing, F. 1951 Calling the soul: a Lamaist ritual. *Semitic and Oriental Studies* 11, 263–84.
Lopez, D. S. 1998 *Elaborations on Emptiness: Uses of the Heart Sutra*. Princeton/New Jersey: Princeton University Press. ["The Heart Sutra as Exorcism", 216–38].
Macdonald, D. 1930 *Moeurs et coutumes des Thibétains*. Paris: Payot.
Mengele, I. 2009 *'Chi bslu*: Rituals for "Deceiving Death. *In* J. Cabezon (ed.), *Tibetan ritual,* New York: Oxford University Press, 103–29.
Millard, C. 2005 *sMan* and *glud*: standard Tibetan medicine and ritual Tibetan medicine in a Bon medical school and clinic in Nepal. *The Tibet Journal,* 30/31(1), 3–30.
Miller, B. 1988 American popular perceptions of Tibet from 1858–1938. *Tibet Journal* 13(3), 3–19.
Mueggler, E. 2001 *The Age of Wild Ghosts: Memory, Violence and Place in Southwest China.* Berkeley: University of California Press.
Nebesky-Wojkowitz, René de. 1998 [1956] *Oracles and Demons of Tibet: The Cult and Iconography of the Tibetan Protective Deities*. New Delhi: Paljor Publications, 343–397.
New York Times. 1928 (No author named) "In Tibet witchcraft holds respected place even today", September 25, 1927, pt. 8, p. 8.
Pommaret, F. 2003. Êtres soumis, êtres protecteurs : Padmasambhava et les huit Catégories de Dieux et Démons au Bhoutan, *Revue d'études tibétaines* 2, 40–66.
—— 2008 Protectors of Bhutan: the role of Guru Rinpoche and the Eight Categories of Gods and Demons (*lHa srin sde brgyad*). *In* J. Ardussi and Sonam Tobgay (eds) *Written Treasures of Bhutan. Mirror of the past and bridge to the future*. Proceedings of the First international Conference on the rich scriptural heritage of Bhutan, Thimphu: National Library of Bhutan, 305–40.
Propaganda Department of the Committee of the Communist Party of the Tibetan Autonomous Region. [Date not given but after 1999 and before 2002]. *A Reader for Advocating Science and Technology and Doing Away with Superstitions*. Published in translation in Saunders 2004, 91–102.
Richardson, H. 1972 Note: Phallic Symbols in Tibet. *Bulletin of Tibetology*, IX (2), 25–7.
—— 1993. *Ceremonies of the Lhasa Year.* London: Serindia.
Richardus, P. (ed.) 1998 *Tibetan Lives. Three Himalayan Autobiographies*. Richmond: Curzon Press.
Saunders, K. and ICT Staff 2004 *When the Sky Fell to Earth: The New Crackdown in Buddhism in Tibet*. Washington, D.C.: International Campaign for Tibet.
Schaeffer, K. R. 2006. Ritual, festival and authority under the Fifth Dalai Lama. *In* B. J. Cuevas and K. R. Schaeffer (eds.) *Power, Politics, and the Reinvention of Tradition: Tibet in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. PIATS 2003: Tibetan Studies. Proceedings of the Tenth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Oxford, 2003. Leiden: Brill, 187–202.
Scott, J. 1985 *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
Shan kha ba 'Gyur med bsod nams stobs rgyal. 1990 [1965?]. *Rang gi lo rgyus lhad med rang byung zangs (The Unadulterated Copper of My History)*. Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives.

Snellgrove, D. L. 1967 *The Nine Ways of Bon*. London: Oxford University Press.
State Council Information Office. 2001. *The Historical Inevitability of Tibet's Modernization*: *The White Paper on Tibet's March Toward Modernization*, November 8, 2001. Beijing: State Council Information Office.
Stein, M. A. 1921 *Serindia: Detailed Report of Explorations in Central Asia and Westernmost China, Carried out and Described under the Orders of H.M. Indian Government by Aurel Stein*. 2 vol. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
—— 1928 *Innermost Asia: a Detailed Report of the Explorations in Central Asia, Afganistan, Iran, Tibet and China*. 2 vol. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Stein, R. A. 1972 *Tibetan Civilization*. London: Faber and Faber.
Steinmann, B. 2003 Les *Lha srin sde brgyad* et le problème de leur catégorisation : une interprétation, *Revue d'études tibétaines* 2, 81–91.
Taussig, M. 1993 *Mimesis and alterity; a particular history of the senses*. New York: Routledge.
TBRC (Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center), New York. On-line database at www.tbrc.org.
Tibet Translation Tool. On-line dictionary at www.thlib.org/reference/translation-tool/.
Verger, P. F. 1981 *Orixás: Deuses iorubás na Africa e no Novo Mundo*. Salvador, Brazil: Editora Corrupio Comércio.
Waddell, L. A. 1895 *The Buddhism of Tibet, or Lamaism with its Mystic Cults, Symbolism and Mythology, and in its Relation to Indian Buddhism*. London: W. H. Allen.
—— 1906. *Lhasa and its Mysteries: with a Record of the Expedition of 1903–1904*. New York: E.P. Dutton.
Wallace, Anthony F. C. 1956. Revitalization movements, *American Anthropologist,* 58(2), 264–81.
Yu Changjiang. 2006 Life in Lara village, Tibet. *In* Barry Sautman and June Teufel Dreyer, *Contemporary Tibet*. New York: M.E. Sharpe, 258–82.
Younghusband, Francis Edward. 1910 *India and Tibet: A History of the Relations which Have Subsisted Between the Two Countries from the Time of Warren Hastings to 1910; with a Particular Account of the Mission to Lhasa of 1904*. London: John Murray.
Žižek, Slavoj. 2006. Believe it or not, *The Drawbridge*, Issue 1. http://www.thedrawbridge.org.uk/issue_1/believe_it_or_not/ Accessed April 17, 2009.

Photosets: examples of *glud gtor* sightings

Descriptions of photographs of ransom effigies observed between 1996 and 2007. All effigies described here are approximately 6–8 inches (15–20 cm) in height except where stated otherwise.

Photoset 1. Cardboard box with sides cut down and front carefully cut away, with a blue line framing the opening, which reveals two central figures. On the right is a woman in Tibetan dress, with a yellow blouse and red *phyu pa* or robe, with large white pearl necklace and a striped apron, in which the stripes are made out of painted dough. The woman has head ornaments, and her hands

are held up in front of her, palms forward, with a yellow disc on the right palm and a blue one on the left. She has a blue tongue sticking out. The figure on her right is painted in red, with long black hair made from wool and two horns, possibly a spirit. It has protuberant pointed breasts and necklaces. Its right hand is stretched out. Behind the figures is a six-pointed threadcross with eight colours, forming a hectagram at the centre, with cotton tufts on the ends of the struts and a white *kha btags* draped on one side. An additional diamond-shaped threadcross of only two colours is fixed to its peak, with a tuft of horse-hair or yarn fixed to its peak. In front of the centre of the main threadcross is a print showing trigrams, folded into a diamond shape, and another piece of paper with prints of human figures, probably the *pho gdong* and the *mo gdong*. To the right of the box is a smaller box, probably a shoe box, with the front and sides cut down to reveal at least one, probably two, rows of seven conical *gtor ma* with red and white disks on the front of each, draped in a white piece of cloth. Photographed by Isabelle Henrion-Dourcy, Lhasa, May 1996 (photos Numériser0004, 0007).

Photoset 2. A single figure sculpted from dough with decoration or cloth, unpainted, with no discernible features. Hands appear to be applauding or may have held an object since lost. Appears to be wearing a crude hat. A flat piece of wood, like a sword blade, is protruding from the right shoulder, with criss-crossed lines drawn over it. Surrounded by at least forty small conical *gtor ma*, some with a single white disc at the peak, others with a maroon red disk, plus a number of *chang bu*. Behind the figure is a crudely made five-colour thread-cross with only a few threads to mark each band of colour, with cotton tufts at each corner. The array is on a flat piece of wood with an upright stick planted at each corner to form a corner post. A low wall, or a series of joined ting lo, has been built from dough along at least one side. A white *kha btags* has been draped around the four corner posts forming a veil around the array. Photographed by Isabelle Henrion-Dourcy, Lhasa, May 1996 (photos Numériser0005–6).

Photoset 3. A single male figure with goatee beard and moustache, dressed in yellow robes, and wearing large rosary with red, white and black beads. Could be a monk. His arms are outstretched, and he is looking upwards. The eyes, eyebrows, beard, moustache and hair are carefully painted or sculpted. The rosary beads appear to be real, perhaps pearls. Surrounding objects in the array cannot be identified from the photograph. The array is in a cardboard box without the sides cut down. A three-coloured, lozenge-shaped threadcross has been tied to the inside of the back of the box, with cotton tufts at the tips of the

protruding struts. Photographed by Isabelle Henrion-Dourcy, Lhasa, May 1996 (photo Numériser0008).

Photoset 4. A single male figure with right hand raised up to the side. The figure is entirely painted in red and has no robes, clothing, decoration or discernible bodily features apart possibly two breasts or nipples. The hat is made out of the same dough as the figure and is not a separate piece. The face has basic features for the note and eyes, but no ornaments or additions. The figure may be mounted on an ox or similar animal, also painted red. Behind the central figure is a large five-coloured threadcross, with a much smaller threadcross in similar colours fixed to its peak. At least eighteen small six-coloured threadcrosses are placed around the edges of the figure as if to form a fence or palisade. There are no cotton tufts on any of the theadcrosses. A white *kha btags* has been placed around the threadcrosses to the rear of the figure. A large number of small unpainted items shaped from dough have been scattered round the figure, possibly *chang bu* or small conical *gtor ma*, together with shreds of yellow and blue cloth. The array has been placed on a flattened piece of cardboard. Another piece of cardboard, another *kha btags* and flattened traces of dough show that at least one other array had recently been placed on the same spot, probably on the same day. Four policemen on patrol march just by the array looking in the other direction. Photographed by Ronald Schwartz, at Bde skyid shar lam (Beijing Donglu) and road running past the Snowland Hotel to the Bar skor Square, Lhasa, May 13, 1998 (photos glud1b–13may 98; glud2b).

Photoset 5. A single male human in traditional robes, with moustache and goatee, with traditional round black hat with red central knot. The human's clothes are made out of cloth, not sculpted, and even the edges of a yellow shirt or undergarment can be seen under the outer robes. The array is swathed in white *kha btags*, with three disposable chopsticks visible, probably part of frame for curtain or threadcross (which is missing). The figure is seated in a *Wahaha Rav-Party* mineral water box. The sides have not been cut down. Rice, *chang bu* and other items shaped from dough have been scattered in the box around the central figure. Photographed by Robert Barnett, June 5, 2005, [Southern] Jiangsu Lu, Lhasa (photos IMG_0482–96).

Photoset 6. A figure with black hair, swathed in white cloth, in box with fourteen *ting lo* butter lamps and imprinted *rgyang bu* paddles made from *rtsam pa* in a cut-down cardboard box tied with a white *kha btags*, but without a hat, below a six-coloured threadcross and four poles with woollen tassels.

Photographed by Robert Barnett, June 9, 2005, at junction of Bde skyid shar lam (Beijing Donglu) and Khrom gzigs khang. Lhasa (photos IMG_0505–34).

Photoset 7. A threadcross in the shape of a double lozenge (two overlapping lozenges) with wool of five colours (yellow, green, red, blue, white) was seen above and behind a single wrathful deity wrapped in a white *kha btags* in a cut-down Lhasa Beer box. Photographed by Robert Barnett, June 24, 2005, at the corner of the southern Gling skor and the street leading to the TAR headquarters, Lhasa (photos IMG_0977–95).

Photoset 8. Single female human, in traditional red and black *phyu pa*, with palms crossed across breast but facing outwards, without hat but with hair in braids, and with single head ornament, in cut-down, upside down cardboard box, with incense, ting lo butter lamp, rice, and red and white *gtor ma* below six-coloured threadcross, swathed in white *kha btags*. Photographed by Robert Barnett, June 26, 2005, Lhasa (photos IMG_1031–48).

Photoset 9. Single male figure in red folded *phyu pa*, with braided hair, pink cowry for mouth, with arms outstretched holding reins stiffened by toothpicks, mounted on a bullock made from glazed *rtsam pa*, with a five-coloured threadcross, swathed in a white *kha btags*, placed in a cut-down Lhasa Beer box. Photographed by Robert Barnett, July 4, 2005 at the south-east corner of the Gling skor (junction of east Gling skor and south Gling skor, also known as [Southern] Jiangsu Lu), Lhasa, (photos IMG_1142–1275).

Photoset 10. An array of five figures arranged in a row in front of a shrine, facing outwards. The figures may be 12–15 inches (30–35 cm) in height. From camera left, the figures are: standing woman with necklace and ornaments, aristocratic dress and headpiece, with palms facing outwards; standing male in aristocratic *phyu pa* and traditional fringed hat, moustache and goatee, and turquoise earrings, rosary, with palms facing outwards; central figure: half-naked blue deity with pointed breasts and crown of skulls, tiger-skin skirt, right hand outstretched with *rdo rje*, mounted on a yellow horse; standing male in red monastic robes and yellow sash with apron piece, yellow *Dge lugs* peaked hat, moustache and goatee, palms facing outward; black demon figure with protruding canine teeth and long black hair, naked and no markings. Each is set on circular metal tray with a tripod base, with a small threadcross behind them draped with white *kha btags* or scarf, surrounded by six or so printed and hand-coloured *rgyang bu,* with butter lamp and money offerings in front of them. Related text noted as *Dpal kho na lugs kyi ma mdos*. Photographed by Stephen Hugh-Jones, July 21, 2005 at a monastery in Southern Tibet (photos IMG_2059–65).

Photoset 11. Single human figure below threadcross, no hat, hands raised up, in front of butter lamp, in Lhasa Beer box. Photographed by Christopher Bell, July 24, 2005, at junction of alleyways in front of Bshad grwa residence, southern Bar skor, Lhasa (photos 100_4107–4128).

Photoset 12. A ceremony in Ba langs gsum mdo (Ch. Balong), near Lha sgang (Ch. Tagong) in Dkar mdzes (Ch. Ganzi) prefecture, Sichuan, in the Tibetan area known as Kham, on October 5, 2005 with four life size figures and two smaller effigies. Appears to be a *gtor rgyag* or related ceremony, probably Bon. In front of the first figure is a small, unpainted, bulbous *gtor ma*, possibly a phallus (see Richardson 1972), with a button at its base, a flower at the front centre and a large button at the peak, with a sprig from a bush adorned with two wisps of white cloth and stuck in the rear of the *gtor ma* pointing towards the first figure, the demon, as if suppressing it. The first figure is a life-size demon, pink and naked, apparently female with knee-length red hair and headpiece of skulls, erect penis covered in a white *kha btags*, wearing an open black cloak, right arm outstretched holding red *rdo rje*-like object, with a four-foot high apparatus behind her head made from four five-coloured threadcrosses set one inside the other, alternately lozenges and squares, ornamented with flowers cut from paper. The second figure is a grey camel or dromedary, about 2 feet high, with ten or more rgyang bu with hand-coloured prints fixed to sticks or paddles about 2 feet tall, with three *pho gdong* or *mo gdong* on each strip. The third is a small demon figure with red body, white hands, blue face and black hair riding a red donkey or mule, about 2 feet tall, with right hand raised and holding a stick or baton. The fourth is an extremely elaborate life-size figure of a pale-faced woman in a long-sleeved Tibetan *phyu pa* edged with fake animal fur, *pang gdan* or apron, right arm showing in pink high-necked blouse, with necklaces, rosaries and headgear, with an unequal lozenge-shaped threadcross behind her head with smaller threadcrosses on three of the corners, and decorated with paper-cut flowers; about 30 banknotes have been fixed to the woman's front. The fifth figure is a young Tibetan man with pale face, small moustache and goatee, in white puffed trousers and shirt with light green cuffs and collar, a short *phyu pa* edged in fake tiger fur, with right arm free and hand on sheathed sword, with braided hair gathered under a modern broad-brimmed hat, and a threadcross behind him similar to the woman's, and banknotes fixed to his front. The sixth and last figure is a monk in burgundy robes with a brocade under-shirt and a short red monastic hat, *Bka' rgyud* style, with right arm upraised, palm forward and a paper-cut flower fixed to the palm. White, red and yellow silk or fabrics have

been fixed to the threadcross behind his head, and a white *kha btags* tied to the hat. According to the photographer, "The figurines were lined up in the monastery courtyard by the men while the women and kids waited around and watched. Then the monks came out of the main hall and there were some chants and then the figurines were processed down the hill to the bonfire. All the little kids and women stayed up on the hill, watching with growing excitement." After the monks and the laymen burnt the figures by the riverside, the boys ran back up the hill and started throwing *rtsam pa* at bystanders. One person said the figurines would "take away the community's sins" and that the event or the ceremony "was unique to their monastery." Photographed by Lucy Hornby, October 5, 2005 in Ba langs gsum mdo, Sichuan (photos 2005_1008Sichuan0121–0156).

Photoset 13. Two sets of photographs from two nearby villages taken within two days of each other. Set 1 shows two arrays each placed on a piece of slate. The central figures, which may be approximately six inches (15 cm) in height, are made out of dough, unpainted and with no fabric used. The first array shows a demon figure mounted on a seated, horned yak, surrounded by *chang bu*, rice and barley flour. The demon has a peg-type face, with the head shaped into a single tetrahedron leading from the peak of the skull to the tip of the nose. Robes have been indicated by lines notched in the dough. Arms are stretched out horizontally to each side and in the right hand the figure holds a miniature spindle made out of a toothpick with red thread wrapped around the spindle and across to the demon's left hand. The demon has protuberant breasts (which the photographer said later had red peppers added as nipples). Behind the demon figure is an animal painted black. The second array shows a figure with a similar head, no breasts or spindle, and with hands stretched forward, palms facing outward. There are three ting lo and other offering bowls, *chang bu* and cones shaped out of dough, with rice around the figure. Set 2 from Lha sgang (Sichuan) shows a similar unpainted dough figure on a slate with black fabric or threads draped round it, a ting lo and *chang bu* in front of it. Photographed by Chris Hatchell, March 10–12, 2006 in Lha sgang and Rgyal sgo, Sichuan (photos DSCO538–0570 and lha sgangs1–10).

Photoset 14. Single unpainted male figure, with blue cloth tied loosely round him, with a cowry shell inserted for teeth, and a Texan-style cowboy hat with curved brim, beneath a five-coloured threadcross (blue, black, red, yellow, white) with a black centre. The figure sits in a cardboard shoe (?) box marked *Jindihongmayi*. The box has been placed in the middle of four "walls" or lines

of *gtor ma*, each consisting of a strip of about fifty unpainted *gtor ma* with rice sprinkled over them. There is a red cloth stretched along them on the eastern wall, a blue cloth on the northern wall, white on the western. The southern wall has been crushed. The walls are about four feet (c.120 cm) away from each other. They may represent the four continents. This effigy array is the furthest to the west that I have seen in Lhasa, almost a mile outside the traditional Tibetan quarter of the city. Photographed by Robert Barnett, July 3(?), 2006, Beijing Zhong Lu, Lhasa (photos IMG_2634–2381).

Photoset 15. Two effigies, one a red demon and the other a human, placed inside with two houses made out of cardboard beer boxes. The houses have no rooves and have windows and doors awnings painted on them, with a front door cut out on one side facing east. The two houses are placed within a larger cardboard box, cut down on all sides to form a low wall, with a gate or opening on the front. At least eight five-colour threadcrosses are placed round the houses, with a *ting lo* butter lamp, multiple items of coloured cloth and other indistinguishable items. The outer wall appears to have been painted or coloured green. Photographed by Robert Barnett, July 4, 2007, at junction of Bde skyid shar lam (Beijing donglu) and "Snowland" Rd, Lhasa (photos IMG_1131–41).

Photoset 16. A black demon with protuberant breasts and a human *ngar mi* in one group at the trijunction of Bde skyid shar lam (Beijing donglu) and "Snowlands" road, set beside each other within a low walled enclosure with *rtsam pa* walls on a wooden board, a five-coloured threadcross on three poles above them and a cardboard box of multiple heaped gtor ma behind them. Photographed by Christopher Bell and Ronald Schwartz, July 17, 2007 Lhasa (photos CB - 100_1077–89; RS - DSCNO1045–65).

Photoset 17. Three metal trays, one square and two circular, with *gtor ma*, with hand-drawn images on small squares of paper fixed to thin *rgyang bu*. These *rgyang bu* were not planks, but single sticks, each one stuck in to a base made from *rtsam pa* and placed on a metal tray. Each tray contains scores of small irregularly-shaped red-painted conical zor or similar. One tray has sticks arranged criss-cross to form a fence around a central tetrahedon. There is no *glud* or effigy. Photographed by Christopher Bell, July 17, 2007 at the corner of Bde skyid shar lam (Beijing donglu) and Qingnian lu, Lhasa (photos 100_1090–113).

Photoset 18. Single male human, unpainted head (fallen off from body) with black eyes, red cloth round body, set in a cut-down cardboard box with *chang*

bu and rice in front of a butter lamp, and placed within an larger cardboard box. Photographed by Christopher Bell, July 25, 2007, Jiangsu Lu, Lhasa (photos 100_4086–94).

Photoset 19. Monk effigy with hands in prayer, with staff with wool tassels beside him, a ting lo in front, and behind and above him a seven-coloured threadcross with blue and yellow tassels in a cut-down cardboard box, set one foot from a cardboard Lhasa Beer box full of *chang bu*, upright reeds or sedge with white cloth ties and black wool, sweets, cardboard swords (?), a *ting lo* and multiple heaped *gtor ma*, with woollen thread tied round the box. Photographed by Christopher Bell, Lhasa, July 22, 2007 (photos 100_1176–1181).

Photoset 20. Three separate but related arrays from one ceremony placed near each other on a disused path near the edge of a small cliff. Each array is on a separate piece of wood. A wall or double wall made out of dough has been placed on two of the boards, at forty-five degrees to the board, with a row of figures half-pressed out of the dough. The wall has been painted or stained in red. Within the wall are double strips of joined conical offering *gtor ma* each with a white disc fixed to the peak. All three boards have rice and other items heaped around the central figures and the offering cones. One? each there is a red *ting lo* with butter and wick in front of the main figure, besides other *gtor ma*. Behind the figure in each array a frame has been erected over which a white cloth or *kha btags* has been draped to form a curtain at the rear of the figure. Strips of coloured cloth have been draped over the curtain. In front of each curtain two long sticks or paddles have been placed diagonally. These are probably *khram byang*, since they are stippled, with hand-made markings. In one case there are fourty-one small "x" characters in the lower section of the left paddle, and seventy-three in the upper section, and thirty-nine and seventy "x" marks respectively on the lower and upper sections of the right paddle, with a small woodblock print of a face fixed to the top of each paddle. There is an arrow made out of wood with paper flight to the right of each figure and a stick with thread wound round it (perhaps representing the spindle) to the left. Behind each figure is a five-coloured threadcross, with cloth triangles fixed to the tip of each protruding strut, and two vertical sticks to the side of the threadcross each of which has three tufts of cotton. The figure in one array is a male human wearing blue robes with hands raised up to the side of his face, palms facing forward with a white circular disc in the centre of each palm. Facial features and decorative details have been painted or sculpted, including cuffs, edging to the crossover of the robe, a yellow sash around the

midriff as a belt, a white sash draped over the shoulders, earrings, lips, eyes, eyebrows, red-tipped ears, hair and nose, with a flat yellow hat and a rosary. An unusual black, rounded *gtor ma* has been placed in front of the array. The figure in the second array is a male human with exactly the same details except that his robes are red (though he is clearly a layman), and his hat is a broad-rimmed sombrero. The figure in the second array has no sticks with cotton tufts beside his threadcross—instead there are two sticks with five lozenge-shaped pieces of cloth of different colours fixed to them. It also has no walls or rows of *gtor ma* around it. The third array has no sculpted figure but instead has a wood-block print of a standing spirit, with palms raised in front of the chest and facing outwards. Photographed by Hanung Kim, August 29, 2008, Dharamsala, India (photos 51–100).

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Robert BARNETT is Director of the Modern Tibetan Studies Program at Columbia University and has taught at Princeton, Beida, Tibet University in Lhasa, and elsewhere. His recent articles have included studies of Tibetan cinema and television within Tibet, women and politics in the TAR, the history of post-1950 leaders in Tibet, and an analysis of Western political uses of the Tibetan issue. His recent books include *Tibetan Modernities: Notes from the Field* (co-edited with Ronald Schwartz, 2008), and *Lhasa: Streets with Memories* (2006).

Katia BUFFETRILLE is an anthropologist, resarcher at the École pratique des Hautes Études and member of the UMR 8155 (Centre de recherche sur les civilisations de l'Asie orientale). She is the author or editor of many articles and books. Here last publications include the translation (with D. Lopez) of Burnouf's *Introduction to the History of Indian Buddhism* (University of Chicago Press, 2010) and (co-edited with A. M. Blondeau) *Authenticating Tibet: Answers to 100 Chinese Questions* (University of California Press, 2008).

Hildegard DIEMBERGER is director of the Tibetan Studies Programme of the Mongolia and Inner Asia Studies Unit, Department of Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge, and is research associate of the Austrian Academy of Sciences and the Italian Ev-K2-CNR Committee. Her publications include the book *When a Woman becomes a Religious Dynasty: the Samding Dorje Phagmo of Tibet* (Columbia University Press 2007), and with Pasang Wangdu, the translations of the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* (Verlag der OeAW, Vienna 1996) and the *Dba' bzhed* (Verlag der OeAW, Vienna 2000).

Thierry DODIN studied Tibetology, anthropology and comparative religions. He has conducted different research projects on cultural change and modern history in Tibet and Himalayan areas for the University of Bonn in Germany. He was a trustee and then the executive director of Tibet Information Network between 1998 and its demise

in 2005. He is the founding director of a successor-organisation, TibetInfoNet.

Marie-Dominique EVEN is a reseacher at the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (Groupe Sociétés, Religions, laïcités, UMR 8582) in Paris. Trained in Chinese and Mongolian studies, she has worked on Mongolian shamanistic oral tradition and popular beliefs, and co-authored with Romanian colleague Rodica Pop a translation of the *Secret History of the Mongols*. She is now focusing on the religious developments in contemporary Mongolia. Part of her research concerns the situation of the Mongols in China.

Mireille HELFFER is an ethnomusicologist and an honorary director at the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS) in Paris. She is the author of numerous publications about the castes of musicians in Nepal, the songs of the Tibetan epic of Gesar and above all the liturgical repertoire (vocal and instrumental) of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, especially the liturgical music of Zhe chen monastery in Nepal about which she is a recognised specialist and has written many articles.

Fabienne JAGOU (Ph.D. Paris, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales) is associate professor at the École française d'Extrême-Orient. She teaches at the École Normale Supérieure in Lyon and at the Lyon Political Science Institute. She is the author of *Le 9e Panchen Lama (1883-1937) : Enjeu des relations sino-tibétaines* (EFEO, 2004) and the editor of "Conception et circulation des textes tibétains", *Revue d'Extrême-Asie* (15, 2005) and co-editor (with P. Calanca) of "Border officials", *Sinologie française*, n° 12, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, (in Chinese, 2007).

Fernanda PIRIE has carried out anthropological research in Amdo and Ladakh since 1998. She is the author of *Peace and conflict in Ladakh: the Construction of a Fragile Web of Order* (Brill 2007), and coeditor of *Modern Ladakh: Anthropological Perspectives on Continuity and Change* (Brill 2008) and of *Conflict and Social Order in Tibet and Inner Asia* (Brill 2008). She is a University Lecturer in Socio-Legal Studies at the University of Oxford.

Alexander von ROSPATT is Professor for Buddhist Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. In addition to the doctrinal history of Indian Buddhism, he specialises in the Newar Buddhist tradition of the Kathmandu Valley. His new book *The Svayambhū Caitya of Kathmandu and its Renovations* (Lumbini 2011) deals with the historical renovations of the Svayambhū Stūpa, and he continues to focus in his current research on the ritual traditions and narrative literature of this tradition.

Nicola SCHNEIDER completed her Ph.D. in Social Anthropology at the Université de Nanterre-Paris X. Her research focuses on contemporary Tibetan nuns, more specifically on the development of two nunneries, one in Kham Minyag and the other in exil, near Dharamsala. She is affiliated to the Centre de recherche sur les civilisations de l'Asie orientale (UMR 8155).

INDEX

A khu ’Brug grags rgya mtsho, 118
A rtsa bla ma Thub brtan rnam rgyal dpal ldan, 170
A skya Rinpoche, 64
Amdo, 5, 49, 52, 61, 83, 84n, 85, 87, 87n, 88, 90, 92, 93, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 101, 102, 104, 105, 123, 140, 315, 324n, 330, 337, 359
Amoghavajra Bajracharya, 228
Amravati (Maharashtra, India), 75
Arunachal Pradesh, 354n
Atiśa, 123
Avalokiteśvara, 43, 164, 167, 177, 178, 194, 200, 225, 256

Ba langs gsum mdo (Ch. Balong), 277n3, 370, 371,
Badri Ratna Bajracharya, 222, 226n3, 228n2, 235
Bagabandi N., 256
Barkor (Bar skor), 72, 73, 74, 75
Bdud ’joms Rinpoche (1904–1987) , 143, 160n, 171, 171n3, 192
Beijing (See Peking), 49n, 56n3, 101, 103, 326, 327, 368, 371, 372
Bhaktapur, 227n, 230, 235
Bhutan, 20, 30n3, 138, 139, 146n, 147, 158, 191, 193, 280, 281 fig. 3, 353n
Bkra shis yar ’phel, 55
Bkra shis dgon gsar, 112, 117n2, 118
Bkra shis lhun po, 3, 45, 45n4, 48, 48n4, 49, 59n2
Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan, 44n
Blo bzang nyi ma (bka’ blon), 124
Blo bzang rdo rje, 55
Bodhgayā 113, 115, 140, 140n, 193, 194, 230, 256, 265
Bodnath (Tib. Bya rung kha shor), 2, 6, 14, 137, 138, 140, 147, 156, 181, 183, 189, 193, 198, 226, 265
Bodong Chogle Namgyal (Bo dong Phyogs las rnam rgyal (1375/6–1451), 13, 20, 20n3, 21n, 22n, 28, 29, 37 fig. 1
Bodong E (Bo dong E), 29, 37 fig. 1
Bodoo D. (1885–1922), 243, 244, 244n3,
Bome Qamba Lozhoi, 62
Brag dkar rta so sprul sku Chos kyi dbang phyug (1775–1837), 169, 169n5
Brag g.yab skyabs mgon Rinpoche , 124n3
’Bras spungs (See Drepung), 26, 116, 120n
’Brug pa khutugtu Blo bzang sbyin pa, 49
Bsam yas, 50n4, 51, 339n
Bstan ’dzin chos rgyal, 177, 180, 182, 196, 206 plate 3
Buddha Ratna Bajracharya, 237
Buddha, 11, 12, 12n, 13, 13n2, 14n, 17, 18, 23, 32, 34, 51, 52, 56, 58, 60, 62, 76, 109, 110, 113, 113n2, 117, 121, 124, 125, 125n, 127, 130, 143, 146, 153, 179, 193, 195, 213, 216, 217, 221, 227, 227n, 230, 232, 245, 246n5, 256, 277, 285, 287, 290, 326n, 338, 343
Bumdegön Nagpo (’Bum lde mgon nag po), 10, 10n2
Burkhan Khaldun (mountain), 257
Byang chub chos gling, 114n3, 120n2
Bylakuppe, 147, 157
Bzod pa (Zöpa) Rinpoche, 265, 265n, 265n3

Central Tibet, 2, 19, 26, 45, 45n, 76n, 48, 50, 54, 59n2, 61, 62, 171n4, 191
Chakpori Hill (Lcags po ri), 74
Chinggis Khan, 3, 242, 253, 257
Chökyi Drönma (See Chos kyi sgron ma, 1422–1455), 10, 11, 13, 14, 20, 20n3, 21n, 25n, 27, 30
Chöni (Co ne), 86
Chos kyi sgron ma (See Chökyi Drönma 1422–1455), 126, 126n2
Čoïbalsan Kh. (1895–1952), 244

Dakba khutugtu, 55
Dalai Lama, 3, 43, 44, 47, 49, 51, 52, 54, 55, 57, 58, 59, 61, 62, 65, 74, 87

Dalai Lama 4th (1589–1617), 4, 44n
Dalai Lama 5th (1617–1682) : 4, 47, 52, 144, 146, 343
Dalai Lama 8th (1758–1804), 49, 50, 53, 57, 60
Dalai Lama 9th, 59
Dalai Lama 10th (1816–1837), 58
Dalai Lama 11th (1838–1856), 58
Dalai Lama 12th (1856–1875), 58
Dalai Lama 13th, 52n, 59, 60, 246, 249
Dalai Lama 14th, 5, 44, 44n, 46, 46n, 59, 60, 60n, 61, 62, 64, 65, 69, 75, 78, 78n2, 79, 80, 81, 110, 112, 114, 115, 115n2, 116, 121, 121n, 122, 125, 131, 139, 180, 191, 195, 198, 259n2, 264, 264n, 265, 267, 267n2, 268, 340, 341, 353, 360
Dambadorž Ts., 246, 246n3, 246n5, 249
Dambažav (abbot), 262n
Darlag (Dar lag), 100
Darva Pandita (6th) Agvaančoinžor-dondov, 245, 245n
Dašbadrakh (historian), 262n
Dbang 'dus pho brang, 147
Dbus, 51n3, 55
Deng Xiaoping, 23
Dga' ldan, 19, 52n4, 118, 120n, 242n2
Dkar mdzes (Ch. Ganzi), 370
Dolma ling (See Sgrol ma gling), 266, 266n4
Doržtseveen (lama), 259
Dpal yul, 137, 138, 147, 157,
Dralha Lupuk (Brag lha klu phug), 74
Drapchi (Gra phyi), 74n
Drepung (See 'Bras spungs), 26, 26n, 32
'Dri gung bsam gtan gling , 120n2
'Dri gung skyabs mgon Che tshang Rinpoche, 120, 124n3
Dus gsum mkhyen pa (1110–1193), 43
Dza' Dpal sprul (1808–1887), 138
Dzonkha (Rdzong kha/dkar/dga'), 24, 25

Erdenepil (abbot), 261
Erdeni Zuu, 244n2

Freda Bedi, 114n3
Fu K'anggan, 48n4, 49n3, 50, 50n, 50n2, 50n5, 50n6, 51n2, 52n, 53, 53n, 54, 55n4, 56

G.yu thog Karma dge legs, 130n3
Gandantegčinlen monastery, 242n2, 252, 254n3, 256n2, 261, 267,
Ganden (See Dga' ldan), 19
Ganja, 99
Gansu, 84, 88, 99,
Genden P. (1892–1937), 246n5, 250, 251, 251n2
Geser (Tib. Gesar), 244, 266
Glang dar ma (See Langdarma), 128n, 248
Gling Rinpoche, 65
Gnas chung, 50n4, 51, 62n, 338n, 352n
Go rams pa Bsod nams seng ge (1429–1489), 125n3, 128, 130n
Gö Shönnu pal ('Gos gzhon nu dpal), 17
Golok, 86, 86n, 88, 90, 90n2, 90n3, 94, 99, 100, 104
Gombožav (abbot), 262
Gonghe (Chab cha), 102
Gongtang Rinpoche (Gung thang rin po che), 90n2, 101
Gri gum btsan po, 286, 287
['Gro mgon chos rgyal] 'Phags pa (1235–1280), 2, 115, 123n4, 126
Gru gu rtogs ldan Shakya Śri (1853–1919), 170
Gser log monastery, 199
Gter bdag gling pa (1646–1714), 142, 169
Gtsang (See Tsang), 4
Guide (Khri ka), 102
Guṇaprabha , 125n3
Gungthang (Gung thang), 10, 10n, 10n2, 10n3, 20, 20n2, 21n, 25n, 25n3
Guru Chos dbang (1210–1270), 146n, 147, 157
Guru Rinpoche (See Padmasambhava), 144, 146, 150, 152, 153, 156, 159, 217
Gushri Khan, 4, 74
Gzan dkar Rinpoche Thub bstan nyi ma, 119, 119n2
Gzhis ka rtse, 45n4

Halesi-Māratika/ Halesi, 3, 6, 163,

163n, 164, 165, 166, 167, 167n,169, 170, 172, 172n2, 173, 174, 175, 176, 180, 181, 182, 184, 185, 186, 188, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197n2, 198, 203 map
Hemis, 148
Henan or Sokwo (Sog bo), 84, 86, 86n, 90, 92, 101, 102, 103, 104n
Hong Kong, 112, 200
Hu Yaobang, 332
Hualong, 86n

Inner Mongolia, 247n, 254n4, 261n, 346

'Ja' tshon snying po (1585–1656) , 169
Jampa Tsedroen (Bhikshuni), 109n, 109n2, 119n3, 121n, 122, 122n4, 123n4, 124n, 130n2, 131n4, 132n2
Jamyang Zhepa ('Jam dbyangs zhad pa), 84, 92, 99, 101, 102, 103, 104, 104n
'Jam dbyangs chos gling, 114n2, 120n2
'Jam dbyangs grags pa, 119, 119n2
'Jam dbyangs Mkhyen rtse dbang po (1820–1892), 138, 143, 146n
'Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas (See Kongtrul), 14n, 138, 143, 144, 280, 290, 361
Jebtsündamba, 242, 242n, 247n3, 257
Jebtsündamba khutugtu 8th, 242, 242n, 247, 249, 249n, 249n3
Jebtsündamba khutugtu 9th, 249n,
Jigdril (Gcig sgril), 90n2, 94
Jo khang / Jokhang (See Tsuglakhang), 53, 59, 61, 62, 72, 74, 75n, 80, 249n, 275n, 336
Junbesi, 171n4

Kaba Paltseg (Ka ba Dpal rtsegs), 26n
Kaḥ thog Rdo rje gdan, 137, 138
Kaḥ thog Rig 'dzin tshe dbang nor bu (1698–1755), 169, 212
Kalkha Mongolia, 214n, 254n4
Karma 'Phrin las bdud 'joms (1726–1789), 169, 169n5
Karma dbang phyug, 172n3, 176, 177, 177n, 178, 178n, 179, 179n2, 181, 189, 190, 190n, 191, 194, 195, 195n3, 196, 197, 197n2, 198, 199, 205 plate 2
Karma Lekshe Tsomo (Bhikshuni), 113n, 114, 114n2, 121n
Karma Nges don, 169, 169n5
Karma Pag shi (1206–1283), 43
Karma sgrub brgyud dar rgyas gling, 114n3, 120n2
Karmapa , 63, 65
Karmapa 16th, 63n2,
Karmapa 17th, 61, 63, 64, 65, 109n2, 121, 124, 124n3, 132, 132n,
Kathmandu, 3, 6, 14, 140, 165, 165n5, 174, 180, 187, 192, 194, 196, 199, 209, 210, 211, 211n, 212, 213, 214, 216, 218, 218n2, 219n, 219n2, 222, 223, 223n2, 224, 226, 226n, 226n3, 228, 228n, 228n2, 229, 230, 231n2232, 232n2, 234, 235, 236
Kham, 6, 137, 138, 140, 170, 277n3, 331 fig. 15, 348 fig. 20, 355, 370
Khams sprul Chos kyi nyi ma 4th (1730–1779), 169
Khams sprul Don rgyud nyi ma 8th (1930–1981), 146n
Khams sprul Rinpoche, 353n
Khan po nomonhan 'Jam pa'i rdo rje, 55
Khri chen 'Gyur med kun bzang dbang rgyal Rinpoche, 182
Khri Srong lde btsan (See Thrisong Detsen), 2, 18n2, 123, 149n2, 152, 178
'Khrul zhig Rinpoche (1924–2011), 171, 171n3, 171n4, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 189, 190, 191, 192, 192n, 193, 196, 199
Kinnaur, 114
Klong chen rab 'byams pa (1308–1364), 143
Kongtrul (See 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas, 1811–1899), 14n
Kulung, 171, 189, 192
Kun bzang ye shes (1865–1946), 265n
Kyangtse Lama, 215, 215n, 216
Kyichu (Skyid chu), 75
Kyirong (Skyid grong), 20n3, 25

Labrang (Bla brang), 85, 86, 90n2, 92, 101
Ladakh , 113, 114n2, 147
Lamo, 50n4, 51
Langdarma (See Glang dar ma), 24
Lanzhou, 99
Lcang skya Rol pa'i rdo rje (1717–1786), 50,
Lha dbang rdo rje, 55
Lha mo bla mtsho, 44
Lha sgang (Ch. Tagong), 277n3, 370, 371
Lhasa, 3, 6, 7, 25, 27, 44, 48, 49, 53, 55, 57n3, 60, 60n, 62, 69, 70, 74, 74n3, 76, 80, 81, 86, 161, 242n2, 249n, 273, 273n, 274, 274n3, 275, 275n, 276 fig. 1, 277, 277n2, 278 fig. 2, 296 fig. 7, 303 fig. 10, 305n, 312 fig. 12, 316, 316n, 317n2, 318 fig. 13, 319n3, 319n4, 320, 320n, 320n2, 320n3, 320n4, 321 fig. 14, 322, 322n, 323, 323n2, 325, 326n, 327, 328, 328n, 331, 333, 333n, 335, 335 fig. 16, 336, 337, 341, 350, 352n, 358, 358 fig. 21, 360, 362, 367, 368, 370, 372, 373
Lhathothori Nyantsen (Lha tho tho ri gnyan btsan/Lha tho do re snyan btsan), 17
Lhatsenkyab (Lha btsan skyabs), 22n
Lhazang Khan (Lha bzang Khan), 74
Lhun grub chos ldan, 130, 130n2, 130n3, 130n4, 131n5
Lithang (Li thang), 76n2, 77, 77n5, 79
Lobsang Dechen (Blo bzang bde chen), 114, 118, 122
Losol D. (1890–1940), 244
Lumbini, 193, 194, 199, 211n, 230

Māra ti ka 'Chi med rtag brtan chos gling, 172, 178, 179, 189, 190, 196, 206 plate 4
Machu (Rma chu), 84, 86n, 88, 89, 90, 92, 93, 102, 103, 104, 104n, 105
Mahāprājapatī Gautamā, 125
Manangi, 199, 199n2, 200, 217
Manchu, 4, 46, 47, 48n4, 49, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 55n3, 55n5, 56, 56n, 56n2, 57,, 59, 61, 62, 260n2, 241, 241n, 242, 253
Manchuria, 50
Māratika Lama (See Ngag dbang chos 'phel rgya mtsho), 6, 171, 171n2, 172n3, 173, 174, 176, 176n, 177, 179, 180, 181, 181n, 182, 182n, 183, 184, 190, 191, 192, 195, 196, 197, 197n, 197n2, 206, plate 1, 206 plate 3
Matthieu Ricard, 137, 138, 139, 145, 146n, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 155, 171n4
Mchog 'gyur gling pa (1829–1870), 143, 146n
Mergen gegen, 17, 247n, 261n
Mi nyag, 112, 118, 119, 123n4
Milarepa, 24
Min Bahadur Shakya, 238
Ming, 63n, 66
Mkha' 'gro Rinpoche, 120
Mkhan chen Bka' bzhi pa chen po Rig pa'i seng ge, 119, 119n, 119n2
Mkhan chen Khra 'gu Rinpoche , 124n3
mkhan po Karma rig 'dzin, 191, 191n
Mkhyen brtse chos kyi blo gros (1893–1959), 143
Mongolia, 2, 3, 4, 7, 17, 18, 61, 113, 241, 214n, 243, 243n, 244, 244n2, 244n3, 245n, 245n4, 247, 247n, 248, 248n5, 249, 249n, 250n3, 251, 252, 253, 253n, 253n2, 254n, 254n2, 255, 256, 256n4, 257, 258, 261n3, 263, 265, 265n2, 267, 268
Mtsho Padma, 158
Mustang, 353n
Mysore, 14n, 45n4

Nag chu, 45, 324
Namdroling Gompa (Rnam sgrol gling dgon pa), 14n
Namo Buddha (Tib. Stag mo lus sbyin), 140
Napper, Elizabeth, 114
Naresh Man Bajracharya, 225, 226n3, 228n2, 230, 235, 236
Nepal, 3, 4, 6, 15n3, 28, 37 fig. 2, 48, 113, 137, 138, 140, 143, 145, 157, 163, 164, 164n, 165n5, 169, 170, 171, 171n4, 180, 184, 186, 188, 191n, 194, 197, 198, 199n2, 203 map, 209, 210, 215, 222, 231,

232n, 233n, 233n2, 234, 234n, 236, 239, 265n, 322n2, 330
Newars, 2, 6, 199, 209, 210, 212, 216, 217, 221, 223, 226, 231, 232n, 234n, 238
Ngabo Ngawang Jigme (Nga phod Ngag dbang 'jigs med), 27n
Ngadag Lhatsun Rinchen Namgyal (Mnga' bdag Lha btsun rin chen rnam rgyal, 1473–1557), 24, 25n, 41 fig. 9
Ngag dbang chos 'phel rgya mtsho (See Māratika Lama), 169n4, 171, 177, 178, 204 plate 1
Ngag dbang chos grags (1572–1641), 125n3
Ngag dbang rdo rje, 169
Ngawa (Rnga ba) , 86
Ngawang Dolma (Bhikshuni), 121n
Nom chos rje khutugtu, 55
nomonhan Ngag dbang tshul khrims (1721–1791), 55
Nor bu gling ka (Dharamsala), 115
Northern Latö (La stod), 10, 25n3
Northern Mongolia, 214n, 243, 248,
Nyang ral nyi ma 'od zer (1136–1204), 146n, 167
Nyi mtsho monastery, 355, 356, 356n
Nyima Dragpa (Nyi ma grags pa), 14n
Nying khri (Ch. Linzhi), 330

O rgyan gling pa (1323–?1360), 146n, 167
O rgyan Smin grol gling, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 147, 148, 151, 152, 156, 158, 182
Očirbat P., 256
Okhaldhunga , 164, 165, 185

Pad nor Rinpoche, 120
Padma gling pa (1450–1521, see Pemalingpa), 146n, 152, 155
Padmasambhava (See Guru Rinpoche), 146, 146n, 147, 149n2, 150, 151, 152, 155, 164, 167, 169, 170, 178, 183, 183n2, 194, 200, 288
Palmo Chöding (Dpal mo chos sdings), 25
Paṇ chen Bsod nams grags pa (1478-1554), 123n2
Paṇ chen Shākya mchog ldan (1428–1507), 115, 126, 129
Panchen Lama, 44, 44n, 44n2, 46, 46n, 49, 51, 54, 56, 57, 58, 59, 61, 63, 65, 104n
Panchen Lama 6th (1738–1781), 49
Panchen Lama 7th (1782–1853), 48, 49, 49n2
Panchen Lama 8th (1855–1882), 58
Panchen Lama 9th (1883–1937), 58, 248, 314
Panchen Lama 10th (1938–1989), 5, 27n, 44, 45, 45n2, 46, 59, 59n2, 62, 63, 316n2, 341
Panchen Lama 11th, 43, 45, 46, 46n, 61, 62, 63, 64
Patan, 223, 223n2, 225, 226, 226n, 226n3, 229, 230, 230n, 231n3, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239
Peking (See Beijing), 47, 53, 54, 55, 55n3, 57, 60
Pema Chodron (Bhikshuni), 121n
Pemalingpa (See Pad ma gling pa, 1450–1521), 21
Pho lha nas (r. 1669 to 1675), 53
Porong (Spo/Spong rong), 25, 25n3, 26
Potala, 59, 62, 74, 74n, 74n3, 75, 167, 328, 336n, 341
Pṛthvī Nārāyaṇa Śāha, 212

Qianlong (1736–1796), 47, 48, 49n2, 50, 50n, 50n2, 51, 53, 53n, 54, 55n4, 58, 59, 60, 62n, 65
Qing, 47, 49, 49n4, 50n6, 51n3, 54, 54n, 56n2, 58, 58n2, 58n3, 62, 86, 241
Qinghai , 84, 88, 99, 104n, 299, 314, 315, 330, 337

Rabjam (See Zhe chen Rab 'byams), 138, 139, 145, 149, 151, 154, 156, 157, 159
Rdo ring Bstan 'dzin dpal 'byor (b. 1760), 50, 58
Rdo rje 'jigs bral , 169, 169n5
Rdo sbis (See Xunhua), 102
Rdza rong phu, 171, 171n4
Rdzogs chen, 137
Reb gong (See Rebkong. Ch. Tongren), 77, 102
Rebkong (See Reb gong), 77
Rgyal dbang 'brug pa, 124n3

Rgyal mtshan nor bu, 64
Rgyal sgo, 371
Rgyal tshab O rgyan theg mchog rdo rje, alias 'Gyur med padma rnam rgyal (1871–1926), 138
Rgyud stod, 127
Rig 'dzin chen po Dngos grub rgyal mtshan (See Rig 'dzin rgod ldem can (1307–1409), 149n2, 146n
Rin chen dngos grub, 123, 124, 127, 127n, 128, 128n,
Rinchen Khando Choegyal (Rin chen mkha' 'gro chos rgyal), 114, 120, 122
Rinčino Elbegdorž (1888–1938), 243n, 245n4
Rje btsun dam pa khutugtu Blo bzang thub ldan dbang phyug 4th (1775–1813), 49
Rme ru rnying pa temple, 336
Rnam grwa Thub bstan zla ba, 128n, 128n3, 129, 130, 130n
Rnam rgyal monastery (Dharamsala, India), 124, 129, 280n2
Roerich N. (1874-1947), 246
Rong ston Smra ba'i seng ge rgyal mtshan (1367–1449), 125n3
Rongwo (Rong bo) , 86
Rta dbang, 354n
Rta'u (Ch. Daofu), 355
Rwa sgreng regent (1912–1947), 52, 52n4

Sa skya khri 'dzin, 120, 122, 122n2, 124n3
Sa skya paṇḍita Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1182–1251), 2, 123n4
Sa skya rin chen chos gling, 120n2
Šagdaržav D. (1880–1922) , 245
Saint Petersburg, 245n4
Śākyamuni, 130, 143, 153
Śākyaśrībhadra, 123n4
Samding Dorje Phagmo (Bsam sdings Rdo rje phag mo), 10n
Sangs rgyas bstan 'dzin, 169n4, 198, 198n3, 199
Se ra byes mkhan po dge bshes Blo bzang dpal ldan, 124n3
Se ra byes rgyud smad mkhan zur O rgyan tshe brtan, 124n3
Se ra, 116, 120n
Sera Khandro (Se ra mkha' 'gro, 1892–1940), 14
Sgrol ma gling (See Dolma Ling), 112, 114, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 120n2, 124, 127, 266
Shan kha ba 'Gyur med bsod nams stobs rgyal (1896–1967), 274
Sharong Karpo (Bya rung dkar po), 104n
Shechen (See Zhe chen bstan gnyis dar rgyas gling or Zhe chen), 137n, 145n, 155
Shedra Tendzin (Bshad grwa Bstan 'dzin), 24
Sherpa, 6, 163, 164, 169, 170, 171, 176n, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 188, 191, 192, 193, 193n, 194, 197, 198, 199
Shireghtu khutugtu, 54
Shug gseb, 114, 120n2
Shunzhi (1638–1662, r. 1644–1662), 48
Si tu Rinpoche (See Tai Si tu), 112, 124n3
Sichuan, 113, 277n3, 305n, 319n4, 371, 348 fig. 20, 355, 370
Sikkim, 48, 63n2, 158, 178, 179, 181, 189, 191, 191n, 193, 277n, 319n2, 338n
Singapore, 199
Skar ma Babu / Skarma Sumdhon Paul, 274, 274n2, 334, 357, 361
Skar ma shar, 50n4, 51
Sku 'bum (Ch. Ta'ersi) , 59n2, 61, 301 fig. 9, 337, 339 fig. 17, 340 fig. 18, 345 fig. 19, 361
Sman ri, 52
Šmeral B., 249
Solu-Khumbu, 169, 170, 176
Solu, 199, 171n4
Songtsen Gampo (See Srong btsan sgam po), 2, 17
Southern Latö, 10
Spiti, 114
Spo bo bkra mo, 330
Sprul sku Pad ma dbang rgyal (Trulku Pema Wangyal), 183, 183n2
Spyi dbang (Chiwong), 192
Srong btsan sgam po (See Songtsen Gampo), 17
Steng po che Rinpoche, 183, 183n3, 193
Ston pa Gshen rab, 284, 285, 286
Sum pa khutugtu, 50

Svayambūnath / Svayambū / Svayambhūcaitya (Tib. 'Phags pa shing kun), 6, 199, 200, 209, 209n, 211, 211n, 213, 213n, 214, 216, 217, 217n, 225, 236

Ta'ersi (See Sku 'bum), 337
Tai Si tu (See Si tu Rinpoche), 63n2
Taiwan, 113, 115, 116, 189, 199
Taktsang Lhamo (Stag tshang lha mo), 86,
TAR (See Tibet Autonomous Region), 74, 75, 316, 316n2, 369
Tashi Tsering (Geshe) (Dge bshes Bkra shis tshe ring), 115, 115n2, 115n3, 121, 121n4, 122, 122n, 123, 123n4, 124, 124n5, 124n6, 125, 125n2, 125n3, 125n4, 126, 126n, 126n3, 128
Tashijong, 147
Tendzin Dragpa (Bstan 'dzin grags pa), 14n
Tengyeling (Bstan rgyas gling), 80
Tenzin Palmo (Bstan 'dzin dpal mo) (Bhikshuni), 120, 121n
Thimi, 235
Thri Künga Namgyal De (Khri Kun dga' rnam rgyal lde) or Thri Sherab Palsang (Khri Shes rab dpal bzang), 25n
Thri Lhawang Gyaltshen (Khri Lha dbang rgyal mtshan), 21n
Thri Namgyal De (Khri Rnam rgyal lde), 21n, 25n
Thride Songtsen (Khri Lde srong btsan) or Senaleg (Sad na legs, 798–815), 32
Thrisong Detsen (See Khri Srong lde btsan), 18n2
Thu'u bkwan Rinpoche 3rd or Thu'u bkwan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma (Thukwang Lobsang Chökyi Nyima, 302, 302n2, 318
Thub bstan chos gling monastery, 171n4, 176, 179, 182, 191, 192, 199
Thub bstan Rdo rje brag, 137
Thubten Chodron (Bhikshuni), 115n, 121n, 123, 123n3, 124n
Tibet, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20n2, 21, 22, 23, 23n2, 25, 26, 26n3, 27, 27n, 27n3, 28, 30n2, 31, 33, 43, 44, 45, 45n4, 46, 47, 48, 48n4, 49, 50, 51, 51n3, 52, 53, 54, 55, 55n3, 55n5, 56, 56n2, 57, 59n2, 60, 61, 63, 63n2, 64, 71, 72, 74, 75, 76, 78, 109, 110, 111, 112, 114, 115, 116, 117n2, 118n2, 121, 123, 123n4, 127, 137, 138, 145, 154, 155, 157, 159, 167, 169, 171, 171n4, 193, 198, 212, 213, 215, 217, 243n4, 245n, 264, 266, 274, 275, 275n, 286, 286n, 294 fig. 6, 296 fig. 7, 297, 300, 300 fig. 8, 316, 316n, 316n2, 317, 317n, 319n, 319n4, 321, 326, 326n, 327, 327n, 329, 330, 331, 337, 341, 349, 353, 356, 358, 359, 361, 371
Tibet Autonomous Region (See TAR), 72, 75, 337
Tilokpur, 114n3
Tongren (See Rebkong and Reb gong), 86n, 90, 102
Trakar Chökyi Tulku (Brag dkar chos kyi sprul sku), 25n
Trakar Taso (Brag dkar rta so), 24, 25, 25n, 26, 39 fig. 6, 40 fig. 7 and 8, 41 fig. 9
Tsang (See Gtsang), 29, 51n, 55, 191
Tsangnyon Heruka (Gtsang smyon He ru ka), 25n
Tshe brtan rdo rje, 55
Tsong kha pa (See Tsongkhapa), 19, 242n2, 343
Tsongkhapa (See Tsong kha pa), 19, 32
Tsuglakhang (See Jo khang), 275

Ukhtomskij Prince (1861–1921), 246n
Ulaanbaatar, 242n2, 252, 254, 257n, 259, 260n, 262n, 265, 266, 266n2
Ungern, 242, 244n3
Upalī, 125
Urga, 242, 242n2, 243n2, 244, 246, 246n, 248, 250

Xiahe, 99, 104n
Xining, 86, 100, 337
Xinjiang, 347
Xunhua (See Rdo sbis), 86n, 99, 102, 105n

Yagyamanpati Bajracharya, 224, 230,

236
Yamdrog Namkha Sangpo (Yar 'brog khri dpon Nam mkha' bzang po), 21n
Yarlha Shampo (Yar lha sham po), 18n2
Ye shes mtsho rgyal, 149n2, 152, 153
Younghusband Francis, 274, 274n3, 275, 275n, 357
Yumbu Lagang (Yum bu bla sgang), 17
Žalkhantsa khutugtu (8th) Damdinbazar, 244, 244n3
Zam gdong Rinpoche, 121
Žamsarano Tseveen, 245n, 245n4, 246, 249, 249n2
Zanabazar (1635–1723), 241n, 242, 244n2
Zhe chen bstan gnyis dar rgyas gling or Zhe chen (See Shechen), 6, 137, 138, 140, 140n, 142, 144, 145, 147, 148, 154, 156, 157, 158, 183, 183n4, 189
Zhe chen dbon sprul 'Gyur med mthu stobs rnam rgyal, 138
Zhe chen Kong sprul Padma dri med (1901–1960), 138, 145
Zhe chen Rab 'byams (See Rabjam), 139, 192, 192n4
Zhe chen Rab 'byams II, 'Gyur med kun bzang rnam rgyal (1716–1769), 137
Zhe chen Rgyal tshab (1871–1926), 143
Zhwa dmar pa 14th, 63n2
Zhwa dmar pa khutugtu Chos grub rgya mtsho 10th (1738–1791), 48, 48n4, 49